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EPIPHANY

OUTLINES FOR THE NEW YEAR

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

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SERMONS, OUTLINES AND ILLUSTRATIONS
FOR SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS

Epiphany

Scriptures Proper to the Day.

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I. COMPLETE SERMON.

'Thy God thy Glory.'

Thy God thy Glory. ISAIAH lx. 19.

I HAVE chosen this thought as a motto for Epiphany partly because I am sure that nothing gives such strength to everything we have to do or bear as the simple witness of your own conscience, that your desire is in everything to glorify God.

For so God has ordered it, that then are we efficient, and then are we happy, when His ends are our ends.

The end always determines the course; and the secret of beginning well, and going on well, is, first, to choose rightly, and then to fix firmly in the mind one great scope.

There are many ends; and every end is again a means to a further end, until we arrive at one final end.

See the Christian series:—

Pardon is an end; but pardon is a means to peace. Peace is an end; but peace is a means to holiness. Holiness is an end; but holiness is a means to usefulness. Usefulness is an end; but usefulness is a means to the extension of God's kingdom. The extension of God's kingdom is an end; but the extension of God's kingdom is a means to heaven. Heaven is an end; but heaven is a means to

eternal happiness. Eternal happiness is an end; but eternal happiness is a means to 'the glory of God.'

And there we rest—because everything ultimately reverts to its source; and everything rests at last in its own original.

Once see that everything springs from God's grace, and you have already stated, in other words, that everything must terminate in 'God's Glory.'

I suppose that every one has something, which he counts his 'glory.' It may not be that on which he has the most reason to plume himself: very often it is not—for very often it is something which seems to others unworthy: but it is that of which he thinks most, and which he holds as his greatest and his best, that is his 'glory.'

Now what I wish is to raise that object which you feel to be your 'glory,' and to place it where it ought to be.

For what is really every man's highest, and noblest, and grandest? Is not it his religion? Is not it his church? Is not it his faith? Is not it his hope? Is not it his eternal life? Is not it all those in one—is not it his God?

It is certain that almost every Jew—whether he were pious or whether he were secular—did live constantly under the power of the principle that 'God' was his 'glory.'

They were, comparatively, a small people—living in the midst of idolatrous nations. Their little country enshrined the one true God. Their government was always of the nature of theocracy. Their God was to them their King, their Leader, and their Lawgiver. Every historical record proved this. It was their national characteristic; and they were very proud of it. Their religion was the pervading element of their whole constitution. It indicated all; it crowned all. The feeling beat in the pulse of every Jew beyond everything.

Need I say how changed, how sadly changed, things are now! Who could go up and down amongst us, in our public and in our private life, and say 'God' was 'our glory'? Do we pride ourselves on our own enlightened and superior creed—do we recognise our own principles—do we avouch our distinctive faith—do we speak of our God, and magnify our God, in all our feelings—as much, I will not say as one of those ancient Jews, but as much as a Mohammedan—as much as a Hindu?

If you doubt, read our public records, read our official documents, and say whether, in this respect, we do not contrast most disadvantageously with, shall I say, the Roman Catholic? Decidedly. But I say more; I say with all modern and all ancient heathenism?

But we need not go to so wide a field. Look rather at the way in which you yourselves have treated your own religion. Have the

special doctrines of Christianity been prominent last year in your conversation? Has the gospel been placed where you place that which you feel to be your honour and 'glory'? Has Christ had the pre-eminence? Are you not conscious, on the contrary, that there were very few exceptions which, after all, were no exceptions at all? You have placed those things quite in the background. Has not the cross, and all the cross specially proclaims, been constantly and intentionally hidden? Would not the truer record be, 'My God my shame'?

It scarcely belongs to the present subject to investigate why these things are so. Perhaps, in such a world as this, the purer the truth, the deeper the shame. Perhaps it is the natural, the necessary, the intended consequence of the religion of the Crucified One, appointed as a part of the discipline of life, a part of the sanctifying processes of the believer, the design and test of those who love God and those who love Him not.

Certainly it is, that it is just what our Master said it would be.

But whatever it be, this is a most humiliating proof what these hearts are made of—that with a religion all love, of which every precept is liberty, and every principle is humiliating—with a moral code, purer, loftier than the human mind ever conceived before—where the light of truth comes to us through the sublimest of channels, resting, in every part, on the unparalleled fact of the sacrifice, even unto death, of the Son of God—revealing a Father with every attribute of wisdom and benevolence—nevertheless it would savour more of mockery than truth if you were to go into any society where man meets his fellow-man with familiar intercourse, and there write up these few obvious words, 'Thy God thy glory.'

Yet how possible it is, by the grace of God, to attain to a very different state, let him say who combined, as much as any man that ever lived, a sensitiveness of disposition with the great force of a natural ambition—'But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.'

To attain that habit of mind, which finds its 'glory' in 'God,' there are three things chiefly requisite.

First, you must accustom yourselves to go about the world with the eye of faith—seeing and feeling, not only the visible but the invisible—recognising another presence besides and above all that is material—connecting with that unseen presence every object—tracing everything direct to His will and power—always opening your mind to the influence of the thought, and ever conversant with the spirit.

Secondly, you must correct your ideas of 'glory.' 'Glory' is not the show and tinsel of life. It is not a passing pageant. It is not

the praise of a fellow-worldling. It is not the external and the dying; but it is what meets the real circumstances of man—as an intelligent, and a moral, and an immortal being. It is what he may carry about with him everywhere. It is what will bear the retrospect of life. It is what the inhabitants of another world call 'glory.' It is the satisfying and the eternal.

Thirdly, there must be a sense of property. The degree in which I hold anything my own is always the measure in which I 'glory' in it. So I 'glory' in my country, in my family, in my honours, in my position, in my name, in my deeds: and so I must 'glory' in my 'God.' He must be mine. I must feel an interest, a community, a oneness to Him. He must have stood to me and I to Him in the most important relations. Here, as everywhere, the possessive stands the highest. 'Thy God thy glory.'

You are right in holding your native country in the highest admiration—its institutions, its wealth, its power, its freedom, its greatness—but never be betrayed to forget, for a moment, that we owe it all to our faith.

England is the great sanctuary of truth, therefore she is what she is among the nations.

Do not ever lose sight of it. You live in a land where the Bible is free, and where the worship is simple—where the conscience is unshackled—where the water of life is pure—where Christ is acknowledged—a land great in missionary enterprise—the centre perhaps, more than any other, of the evangelisation of the whole world. Therefore England's past, therefore England's present, therefore England's hope—'Thy God thy glory.'

And many precious things you have because of it, and if God see it well, may He add to this year how many soever a hundred-fold, and that your eyes may see it—to your basket and to your store—to your friendships and to your delights—to your affections—to every hidden joy that you have.

But the Fountain is better than the stream—the Giver is dearer than the gift—the best of all is to see in them the fruit of God's benevolence. Up and up your mercies rise, one above another; and they come and pass, and re-pass, in quick succession—but as angels ascend and descend the ladder, let your eye, your ear, your heart be on Him, who stands to bless on the top—'Thy God thy glory.'

When you walk out in this beautiful world, and when you feel the influences of the scenes around you—when the flagging spirits are roused—or the tumult of thought is hushed—or the bloom comes back to the cheek—or the mind soars away on the inspiration of the project—do not talk of nature's hand, or of nature's work, or of

nature's processes. Give God His own. Think of Him. Of Him, 'of whom are all things, and by whom are all things, and by whom all things consist'—of Him, who breathed that sweet refreshing air —who reared that mountain—who pencilled that flower—who arched that sky—let Him be thy praise, and Him be thy joy—'Thy God thy glory.'

Or, when you are seeking some well-earned commendation—whether it be from the testimony of your own conscience, or from the admiration of the world—refuse it not; but remember well—if you have spoken and written so excellently—who gave you the ability! if you did that noble act, who furnished the opportunity and the power! if you gave that charity, who supplied you with the means! Pass on the praise to its rightful owner. Happier far that He has used you, than that you have done it. 'Thy God thy glory.'

In all your conversation this year, which you hold one with another, in daily life, talk as you will talk, on whatever your heart findeth to talk of; but in the midst of it all, may it be quite clear which is the best, and which is the dearest, and which is the happiest topic of your soul. Be always turning to it, as your focus; be always rising to it, as your climax. Let it animate all: let it delight all—'Thy God thy glory.'

But, above all, in your own spiritual life, let all your confidence, and all your boast, be in exalting Him. Not that you chose Him; but that He chose you—not that you can stand; but that He can carry—not that you can perfect anything; but that He is faithful to finish His own work—not that you have any good thing to show, but that He has clothed you in His own perfections—not that you are anything, but a poor miserable sinner; but that He is thine—not that He is yours, but that you are His—His for ever. 'Thy God thy glory.'

And your very anticipation of heaven—that one bright ray, which runs defined and unchecked across the valley to the mountain's base, what is it? It is not place; it is not work; it is not rest; it is not fellowship; it is not state—but all these in one. It is He—to be 'with Him,' to be 'like Him.' 'Thy God thy glory.'

If thus you place the true crown upon the year, you will walk it, in all its parts, with the most perfect independence.

You may be rich, or you may be poor, as the world calls rich and poor: you may be much in social intercourse, or you may pass your time in solitude: you may be honoured, or you may be aspersed; you may be liked, or you may be hated—but you carry with you your own inalienable, imperishable possession—you draw from an upper spring which never runs dry: you may retire back into the sanctuary of your own deep, holy joy—you may live always as under

the Shechinah—you have a light that cannot go out—'Thy God thy glory.'

And, by a beautiful return, the 'glory' which you would not take, becomes all His own. You spend life in making diadems for Jesus: and Jesus Himself, with all His crowns, is yours; and the more 'glory' you have given Him, the more 'glory' you find in Him: and higher, than if your name were blazoned on all the archives of fame—greater, than if the whole world lay at your feet, is 'Thy God thy glory.' J. VAUGHAN.

II. OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

The Influence of S. Paul.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. EPH. iii. 8.

HRISTIANITY of course has its foundation in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus the Redeemer. Christ Himself, even still more emphatically than the doctrines which He taught, was the great Revelation of the mystery of God. But when Christ had returned to the heaven from which He had come down, He willed that the greatest and most lasting impulse in the propagation of His new religion should be given, not by those who had companied with Him from Galilee to Calvary and had been eye-witnesses of the events of His ministry, but by one 'born as it were out of due time,' summoned by special miracle to be a preacher of the Gospel, taught by direct revelation. It pleased God who had separated Paul from his mother's womb and called him by His grace, to reveal His Son in him that he should preach Him among the heathen. Peter, James, and John, the favoured three, elect among their fellow-Apostles, having truly fulfilled their vocation, withdraw into comparative obscurity: and the foremost personage in the Book which is designated the Acts of the Apostles is he who at the death of the first Christian martyr is known only as a young man whose name was Saul.

What was the cause of the great influence which S. Paul exerted upon all the subsequent forms of Christianity? What vital ideas does the Church owe to his teaching? What peculiar features were there in his mental constitution and previous training which

fitted him to be a chosen instrument for declaring the name of Christ?

I. First, we may say that we owe to S. Paul pre-eminently the grand and pregnant idea of a Catholic Church. If it had not been for his constant and energetic assertion of the universality of Christ's religion, Christianity might have remained only a reformed and expanded Judaism of which Jerusalem would have remained the necessary centre. In the manifold wisdom of God the preparatory revelation by which He had trained mankind through the agency of one nation for a higher spiritual life had been partial, limited, restricted, predominantly ceremonial. The childhood of the world was not ready for freedom: rules of action had to be enacted and rigidly enforced, principles could not be nakedly and argumentatively enunciated. God's covenant was with one family, and subsequently with one race. For centuries it was true, 'Salvation was of the Jews.' They only maintained a substantially pure conception of the true God, they only had received such instruction as enabled them to offer acceptable worship, they only had a right to claim to be the peculiar people of God. But the Mosaic law of ritual observances had only a pedagogic function. It was a discipline of childhood introductory to the fuller self-regulating freedom of manhood. The pictorial teaching of ceremonial appealing to sense was to give way to the spiritual truths discerned by the inner eye of reason and faith. The typical and partial was to be absorbed into the universal. Jesus when He appeared among men announced the establishment of a Kingdom of Heaven, of which the earlier Jewish kingdom had been only the foreshadowing, and He opened this Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. His parting word at once of prophecy and precept to His disciples on the eve of His Ascension was this, 'Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.' The first-called Apostles, when they began to preach the new message of spiritual deliverance with which they had been intrusted, were hardly able to conceive the truth of the development of Jewish ordinances into full Christian liberty. Educated exclusively in Jewish ideas, surrounded during all their earlier lives by the associations of Palestine, haunted still by indistinct visions of the possible restoration to their nation of a temporal sovereignty rivalling that of Solomon in old time, they clung tenaciously to Mosaic precedent. Even the chief of their company, Peter the Rock Apostle on whom Christ built His Church, by whose mission to the heathen centurion Cornelius was manifested the truth that in every nation he that feared God and worked righteousness was accepted with Him, even he only imperfectly and hesitatingly admitted the breadth and expansiveness of the new

revelation. He was afraid to venture in practice what he was almost forced to admit in theory. It was reserved for S. Paul to establish for all future generations on unalterable foundations the ennobling doctrine that in Christ Jesus there was neither Jew nor Gentile, but that all were one in Christ Jesus. He was made the minister of the mystery which in other ages had not been made known to the sons of men, that all nations should be fellow-heirs with the Jews, and of the same body, and be made partakers of God's promise in the Gospel. Others might be Apostles of the circumcision, he was pre-eminently the Apostle of the uncircumcision.

When the call came, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. With a brave perseverance and unflagging zeal, amid contempt, obloquy, and persecution, unabashed by the cry that he was a traitor to his religion, heedless of popularity, supported by the stern consciousness of right, he upheld and won the cause of Christian liberty. Over a large part of the then known world he proclaimed both to Jews and Gentiles that 'God had made both one, and had broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished by Christ the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that through Christ both have now access by one Spirit unto the Father.' To establish this principle firmly was indeed to change the world's religion. Imperial Rome would readily tolerate all forms of religion so long as they would confine themselves within their own national limits, and avoiding proselytising refrain from interfering with the traditional worships of the Imperial city; Jerusalem orthodoxy as represented by its Pharisaic zealots would admit all heathen nations into the privileges of Divine covenant if they 'would be circumcised and keep the law of Moses.' S. Paul taught the nobler, more comprehensive, more conciliatory truth, opposed alike to the easy tolerance of polytheism, and the rigid intolerance of a partial monotheism, that there was one fold, one Lord Jesus Christ, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, in whom all men could become one and could enjoy a divinely-given freedom. All Christendom this day from east to west, and north to south, is an undying witness of the marvellous issues of the conversion of him to whom, though less than the least of all the Apostles, was given the grace that he should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

II. We pass on to notice a second manifestation of the influence of S. Paul. It is to him that we are indebted for the peculiar form of what we may fairly call European Christianity. That is a narrow and inadequate view of the reality and objective certainty of Christian truth which forbids us to acknowledge that the one supreme truth has various aspects and adapts itself with varying modifications

to different classes of minds. In a noble sense of the term, Christ's religion 'becomes all things to all men:' being the universal religion for humanity, it is yet able to meet the special wants of every race and every phase of civilisation. It is notorious that the theology of each Church has been marvellously affected by the intellectual characteristics of the nation amongst whom it was established, and by the outward circumstances of its history. This accounts for the greater or less prominence of different doctrines in different parts of the Christian world, or in different periods of Church life.

It was given to S. Paul to provide for the special wants and tendencies of the European mind. It is no idle fancy to say that he was European rather than Asiatic in his mode of viewing and presenting Christian truth. All historical experience serves to confirm the distinction which the acute philosopher of antiquity noted in the European and Asiatic character. The Asiatic mind is peculiarly speculative: dreamy, mystical if you choose to call it so. It does not interest itself much with practical questions about human life and conduct, it deals rather in metaphysical problems. It elaborates theosophies, but cares little for politics: so it knows not the love of freedom, and is content to remain listless under the sway of an absolute despotic system. The European mind is essentially different in its constitution and its tendencies. It is ambitious rather than contemplative: a strong will and restless spirit are dominant, rather than subtle intellect. To it belongs the genius of political organisation, and all the problems which determine human relations. In the providence of God, with whom lie the issues of history, European races were destined for the supremacy of the world. 'Westward the course of empire turned its way.' The great crises of universal history have centred round European races either in Europe itself or in the lands to which they have gone forth. With them lies all strength, all progress, all vitality. In the East all is stationary, unchangeable, internally feeble. The future of the world, so far as history can predict the future from the past, hangs upon the forms which European development assumes. How then and by what means was the new doctrine of Christ presented to the European mind? How were the profound ideas of Christian theology and all their far-reaching consequences brought to the knowledge of Europe and its inhabitants? Out of all the Apostles and first preachers of Christ's Gospel, S. Paul was raised up to be the great founder of distinctively European Christianity. His mind was logical rather than metaphysical, argumentative rather than rhetorical. His mental constitution did not dispose him when he became a convert to the faith of Jesus Christ to bestow his principal or earliest attention on the questions so intensely interesting to an

Oriental as the mysteries of God's existence and nature, and the exact mode of distinction between the Eternal Father, the Eternal Son, and the Eternal Spirit, and the mode of the co-existence of the Divine and human natures in the Incarnate Son. He apprehended Jesus in one aspect above all others, viz., as the Son of God come to be the Redeemer of man. Not the nature of God in Himself, but the relation of God to man, was the prominent subject of his religious reflection. The more we study his peculiar line of teaching and thought in his Epistles, the more shall we perceive how little time he spends in proving Jesus to be the very Christ of Hebrew prophecy, or the Word of God existing in ineffable union with the Father before His manifestation on earth: not that he ignores or denies these truths when occasion demanded a protest against the opposed falsehoods—but, as a matter of fact, he devotes himself mainly with all the majestic power of an accomplished dialectician to establish the doctrines of man's fall and need of redemption, the utter inefficacy of Levitical ceremonialism or natural morality to reconcile man to God and restore him to holiness, the blessedness of the gift of Divine redemption by the coming into the world of the Son of God to live and die in behalf of sinful man: the need of personal faith in this redemption to appropriate its attendant benefits of forgiveness of sins and recovery of righteousness. Christ was preached by S. Paul pre-eminently as the universal Saviour and Redeemer, less being said of His offices as Legislator and Prophet.

W. INCE.

Notes of the Church.

EPHESIANS iii. 8-12.

THE last thoughts of a Christian man, drawn out of the depths of a wide and varied spiritual experience, are commonly the most precious; his last words the most memorable, and what are commonly called 'The Epistles of the Imprisonment' contain the last words and the last thoughts of S. Paul. If we apply to spiritual phenomena the only reasonable canon of interpretation, we must suppose that his later horizon of vision was wider than his earlier, his convictions more settled, his sense of proportion quicker, his discernment more penetrating, his faith more calm. The thoughts of men are widened—widened at once, and deepened—'with the process of the suns.' And Paul's thoughts seem to have been no exception to this moral law.

Take three of the Apostle's notes of the Church; three only, but they are the three chief, the three most truly fundamental.

OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

I. Love. The apprehension of divine things in their simplicity, proportion, and grandeur is only possible to the soul that approaches contemplation of the great objective realities in the spirit of love. Faith energised by love is the one availing thing. Faith is the hand which apprehends; love which gives power and direction and tenacity to the hand. Faith that grasps, but love that prevents that grasp from being relaxed; faith that believes, but love which knows in whom it has believed. Faith which prompts, but love which sustains. In love, underlying everything which the name in its widest, noblest sense has ever been made to include, can we discern the note of the Church widely, distinctly, among ourselves at the present day. 'Love,' says Augustine, 'is the virtue of the City of God.'

II. But I pass from the note of love to that of unity; from the soil in which faith grows to the fruit which it produces. On no other than the broadest basis can you build up a church which shall be truly catholic, which shall embrace the world. The Church of Rome, by piling article on article, each later invention making larger demands on a reasonable faith, and at length, by her claim of absolute infallibility in matters of doctrine and morals for a man, repelling it utterly, has done her best to invalidate her proud pretensions to be the divinely-appointed guide of Christendom into all truth. Not by instruments of this kind does the Spirit of Christ seem to have kept alive truth and faith in the world. Not by the peremptory decision of an œcumenical council—the decision of a narrow or bare majority, and always the decision of men both separately and collectively fallible—does Paul trust that the faith of Christ shall be maintained, but thus: 'If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.' We cannot afford to bandy words upon disputable propositions—to divide ourselves into divers and almost hostile camps, each with its doctrine and interpretation; we dare not break up a great church, with its mission as clearly stamped upon it as ever mission was stamped upon a church planted even by Apostles' hands, with fragmentary and partisan organisations, powerless because dissentient, incapable of discipline, because following the voice of no one leader, recognising the sound of no one battle-cry. If union ever was strength, it would be strength now; and union is only possible on the broad basis of an historical, not a theoretic Christianity.

III. And what is the function of men—the part they have to play in this great conflict, terminable only with the second advent of Christ, between light and darkness, truth and falsehood, good and evil? What is the office of the Church, in the widest, largest sense, as the divinely-endowed, but yet human institution, which it pleases God to use as His instrument in carrying out these far-reaching,

eternal purposes? 'The Prophetical Office of the Church' was the title of one of the great theological treatises with which John Henry Newman enriched the literature of his country, while he was yet the vicar of a parish in England, and before he became a Cardinal-Prince of Rome; and so Paul seems to regard the Church, as a whole, as a vast instrument for prophesying to men in the name and for the Truth of God. Even when the Kingdom of God was being set up in the world they were the prophetical rather than the regal city and its chosen founder that struck men's minds and drew the crowd after them. And so it seems to me that now people are not seeking priests to absolve or to offer sacrifice for them, but prophets who can teach them and guide them. Prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers —these are the needs of the Church to-day.

BISHOP FRASER.

The Teaching of Angels by the Church.

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God. EPHESIANS iii. 10.

I. OBSERVE the indirect testimony which is given by the text to the superiority of the wisdom manifested in the work of redemption, as compared with the work of creation; for we may well suppose that the material fabric of the universe is subjected to the ken and the scrutiny of angels, in all the grandeur of its magnificent and in all the delicacy of its minuter portions. We may believe that when at the word of the Creator the army of worlds came forth from nothingness, angels looked admiringly on, as globe after globe took place amongst the ranks of the starry host; and ever since we may suppose they have been free to pass through the reaches of space, to search into all that our Maker has fashioned, measuring the grandeur of His productions, and prying into the nicest contrivances of His creative skill. We think, and in a degree the thought is most just, that we attain to no common perception of the wisdom of the Lord, when we are enabled to lay bare some of the secrets of nature; when we avail ourselves, for example, of the optician's art, scanning the heavens, and tracing the harmonious circuits of suns and systems, or when we probe the tiniest atoms, and find whole worlds warring and legislating in their every recess. But if the discoveries within our reach are so suggestive of the wisdom of the Almighty, would not that wisdom shine forth a thousandfold more conspicuously, if we had an angel's wing on which to soar, and an angel's capacity with which to search; if in place of being limited to one narrow sphere, and con-

fined to the exercise of the most imperfect resources, we had the privilege of passing to and fro through the length and the breadth of the universe, and of reviewing its contents with a gaze which could neither be mastered by what was stupendous, nor perplexed by what was intricate? Yet we may conclude from the words of our text, that all God's wisdom in the works of creation is, as it were, cast aside by the angelic company, and they come and sit with the docility of children at the feet of the Church, and derive their lessons from the mighty interposition of which she is the subject. Does it not, then, follow in the way of consequence, that redemption must far surpass creation in the lessons which it teaches of the wisdom of God; that in the interference of the Redeemer for the salvation of our fallen race there is the greatest manifestation of that attribute whose name is sometimes used for that of the Eternal Son Himself?

II. The Church on earth instructs the angels in heaven with regard to 'the manifold wisdom of God.' God's purpose may be as much hidden from the spirits which surround His throne, as from ourselves who sojourn in a distant corner of His empire. When Daniel had applied himself by fasting and prayer to understand the mystery of the restoration of his people, the angel Gabriel was commissioned to clear up to him the mystery. Then it is evident the angel was divinely instructed for this special occasion; that of himself he could have known little more than Daniel of God's counsels respecting Jerusalem. And in like manner it may fairly be questioned, whether angels were more conversant than men with God's plan of mercy towards this fallen creation; whether they were not left, like the Jews themselves, to read out from types and figures the scheme of human salvation. Our text seems to require us to suppose cherubim and seraphim bending over the earth, as under the Jewish law their golden emblems bent over the Ark, and searching with intense earnestness into the display of the Divine wisdom there presented. The Ark of the Covenant was an abiding symbol of God's gracious presence with His people, and typified those peculiar benefits which belonged to the covenant of peace meditated by Christ on behalf of the spiritual Israel. The covering of this ark, you will remember, was of massive gold, denominated the mercy-seat. At each end of the mercy-seat was a golden cherubim, placed in such an attitude that it seemed to bend over the ark, as if eagerly desirous to pry into its mysteries; and as if to assure us we are not wrong in thus interpreting the emblem, S. Peter expressly says of the things of redemption, that they are the things which the angels desire to look into. The Greek is still more emphatic than the English: 'Things which the angels desire to bend over;' thus making the reference to the cherubim on the mercy-seat both undeniable and explicit. But if angels are represented as bend-

ing over the ark, if they are spoken of as desiring to look, rather than as actually looking, surely you may suppose, that previously to the Incarnation the mysteries of redemption were no more discovered to them than to men, but that they, as well as the Jews, were required to decipher a vast assemblage of types, and to gather from Divine intimations the splendid appointments of mercy.

Angels, as well as ourselves, must have needed a distinct revelation before they could grapple with God's purposes of grace; and when, therefore, the fulness of time came, and God 'sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law,' we suppose that the season was one of stupendous discovery to the angelic hosts; so that when they crowded the firmament on the birthnight of Jesus, they did not more shout in congratulation of man than in admiration of the scheme laid open to themselves.

H. MELVILL.

Life's Purpose.

According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.
EPHESIANS iii. 11.

A PURPOSE! That is, most certainly, what we all need. No man or woman can be at their best until they have found a purpose in life. Life is no dreamy enjoyment of manifold experiences. Life is an affair of the will; life is action; life is labour; life is effort; life is consecration; life is sacrifice. To live, you must make a choice out of all that has been proffered to you. You must determine in what direction you will act.

That is the voice that should speak—the voice that all of us faintly recognise. True, it is no easy business to which it calls, for this world is a strange medley of confusion, and it is hard to sort ourselves. Circumstances hinder and imprison. And, for many of us, not one of all the roads open to men's actions may seem to offer a favourable opportunity. We are conscious that we have never begun to be fully awake; we are still unfulfilled, so long as we have never yet arrived at any purpose in life to which we could surrender ourselves.

A purpose! What is it that constitutes a purpose? What is its essential characteristic?

I. It must be something older, deeper, stronger, than ourselves. That is our prime need. We ask of a purpose that it should shift the centre of gravity outside ourselves. It is ourselves that we want to escape; the weariness, the stupidity, the futile disappointment of

self-service. We are born to serve something nobler than ourselves, born to engage in a life older and vaster than our own. That is why we instinctively feel the necessity of passing under the pressure of some duty, some activity, to which we may stand committed, dedicated, yielded. The purpose that should fulfil us must be one that puts us to school. It must command us, make demands of us, control and sway us. It must ride over us like the moon above the tides, so that all that is in us swells or sinks, rises or retreats, obedient to the motions of this imperial guidance.

II. A purpose must wield authority over us. That, certainly, we ask of it. And yet, if it is to occupy us wholly and richly, it must root this authority deep down within the soil of our innermost being. It must claim us by a living touch such as evokes in us the voluntary witness to its validity. We must be able to bear our witness to its worth, to set our seal to it that it is a true and vital purpose. We must be able to transport ourselves into it, to fuse ourselves with it, so that we and it become one undivided thing; and we can hardly say at last whether we have chosen it or it has chosen us.

III. 'According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord.' How the message sweeps in to our relief! It lifts us like a breath of fresh air. There *is* a purpose, then—a real, living, positive, unfailing purpose. A purpose of God's own, to which He holds, towards which He works, by which He steers. Amid all the bewilderment of history, through all the tangled distresses of man's social growth, God's Will holds on its way. He has a hope, fast and sure; he sees his goal.

Here is the faith to which the Jew ever clung—faith in the eternal purpose. This is the Jew's prophetic gift, by which he discerned that all things must have an end—that all things must work together towards some good. He could not believe in One God, Lord of all, without believing that that God would give unity, consistency, coherence, to the entire body of fact. And man's own story could not but be part of that body of fact. It could not be that man alone, in all nature, tended nowhither, had no befitting destiny. Nay! for him, above all, there must be a purpose. So the Hebrew heroes believed. They believed in a purpose. And they strained their sad eyes to see it. And they lifted themselves on high watch-towers that they might catch its first dawn; and they listened, with anxious ears, through the black night. What shall it be? Is nothing seen? Is nothing heard? And sometimes the outlines started clear—the vision of a perfect King, in whom all mankind was crowned, or of a Servant, in whose meek loyalty the will of God found flawless expression. And then again the clouds swept over it, and the darkness drowned it, and only the bitter cry escaped

them, 'Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, Thou Lord God of Abraham our Father.'

But they were right. But they were justified. God would not fail them. God did not deceive them. And at last one night it lay there—a tiny Child, laid in a manger. It is come; it is here! The purpose of God—that is it. Look at it. The eternal purpose in which all shall find a meaning. It is Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And this eternal purpose, large and wide as it is—large and wide enough to gather up into itself the whole sum of human existence—is nevertheless able also, in the Person of Jesus Christ, to adapt itself with infinite pliability to the single and separate story of each solitary soul. To each one of us, to each alone, as if there were no other, He offers Himself, to become the one Purpose of our lives. All are being turned to spiritual use by Christ Jesus, as He lives and works at God's right hand. Everything of ours is a contribution to Him; everything of ours adds to Christ's store of resources; everything of ours goes into the common fund; on everything He lays His hand, that He may work it into the eternal purpose.

H. SCOTT HOLLAND.

III. OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL.

An Eastern Dawning.

There came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him. S. MATTHEW ii. 1, 2.

THE relation by S. Matthew of the visit of the Wise Men from the East illustrates for us in a noticeable manner the principle in accordance with which we believe the Apostles and Evangelists to have been directed in the compilation of their narratives by the Holy Spirit of God. They were not compelled to write every event or saying in the same order, the same words, or with the same object. Amongst the innumerable incidents which might have been chronicled each was permitted to record anything which he remembered most vividly, which had struck his own mind most forcibly, or which suited best his own purpose and point of view. All that our experience of God's manner of revealing Himself to us teaches us to look for, is that nothing should be presented to us which could be shown to be contrary to fact. Accepting S. Matthew's Gospel

as the inspired Word of God, for abundant and satisfactory reasons, we receive, on its testimony alone, the record of the visit of the wise men from the East.

I. But that such a visit was in itself highly probable can be shown from other sources. That a general expectation of some great Deliverer to arise in the land of the Hebrews was current at this time is a matter recorded in secular literature. The Roman historian, Suetonius, writing about seventy years after Christ, says that a firm persuasion had long prevailed throughout all the East that it was fated for the empire of the world to fall into the hands of One who should go forth from Judæa. Tacitus, a contemporary of Suetonius, speaks to the same effect. And the Hebrew historian, Josephus, who lived a little before Suetonius and Tacitus, and who wrote about the wars of the Jews and the Romans, which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem, tells us that what most cheered on his countrymen in undertaking that disastrous struggle was a mysterious oracle that was found in their sacred writings how, about that time, One from their own country should become governor of the whole habitable earth. In the East itself—whether that wide expression here means Persia or Chaldea—it is more than possible that some form of the ancient prophecies, such as that of Balaam, may have survived —how that there should come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre should rise out of Israel. The great plains of Chaldea and Persia, with their vast horizons, and their deep, clear, tranquil nights, have always been the homes of patient observations of the stars. Countless in number, fathomless in mystery, rolling round in their stately cadence, advancing and receding, crossing and declining, as in the silent rhythm of a majestic measure, they seemed to speak of the power of God and the destinies of men. The wise men in Egypt, in China, in Chaldea, and in Persia were profoundly impressed with their mystery and their importance, and thus laid the foundations of astronomical science. And the tendency of all true science is to point the way to faith. A perception of the harmonious order of the firmament, and especially a knowledge of the movement of the heavenly bodies, would direct devout minds to Him who is the Centre and Sun of the spiritual system, to the creative Word, the Source of all order. Their study of the stars was used as the instrument of advancing and directing their faith. What the star was the serene simplicity of the unquestioning record of S. Matthew does not even suggest. It is said that in the astronomical tables of the Chinese a record has been preserved that a new star did appear at that very period; but it is simpler for us who believe the Gospel histories to suppose that the light which aroused such intense and unparalleled interest in the minds of these sages as they scanned the

heavens from their watch-towers in the far East was truly other than natural, and that He who at so momentous an event in the history of mankind made glory shine over the hills of Bethlehem at midnight such that the host of heaven were seen praising God, made also a ray of the same heavenly splendour to gleam on those who in their own way were also seeking the truth.

II. What was the result of the mission of the company of wise men when they returned to their homes in the East we do not know. Churches were founded in apostolic times amongst the Parthians, the Medes, the Persians, the Chaldeans. In the fourth century we find the Christian Emperor Constantine writing to the famous King Sapor the Second on behalf of his Christian subjects in Persia, but when war broke out with his son Constantius the magi of that day easily aroused the king's suspicion against those who held what had now become the religion of the Roman Empire, their enemies, and Simeon, the Bishop of the Persians, suffered martyrdom after forty years' persecution. In the next century it was in Persia that the Nestorian Church found refuge and founded a Christendom of their own with a Patriarch and twenty-five Metropolitans in different countries under his direction.

III. Christ in His new kingdom of righteousness gave us many sources of help and regeneration, not only for hereafter, but also for the present life. He gave us that sense of sin which is the essential antecedent of all improvement; He gave us that inward peace and serenity and elevation which come from the sense of forgiveness through His atoning sacrifice; He gave us the secret of true happiness and real nobility of character, which is to be found in the complete and constant sacrifice of self; He gave us that pure domestic home life which is the gift for which we never cease to thank Him best and most; He has given us the only true liberty, which lies in the conquest of self; the only true equality, which is in the oneness of all before God in the Communion of the Christian Church; the only true brotherhood, in the recognition of the sonship of all alike to God.

No star now shines over the human dwelling-place of Christ, no fresh illumination from heaven guides wanderers and inquirers to the shrine of God. On us is laid the dignity and the burden of being the light of the world.

ARCHDEACON SINCLAIR.

OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

The History of the First Acquaintance of the Gentiles with Christ.

S. Matthew ii. 1-12.

'NOW when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem.' It is a strange scene that the evangelist here sets before us, and which probably took place soon after the presentation of Christ in the temple (when He was forty days old). Wise men from the east suddenly appear in Jerusalem. Our text really calls them Magi, a name by which in Persia and Arabia, from which country they probably came, all learned men were designated, but especially philosophers and priests,—a class of men who made the investigation of nature their business, and united to this many kinds of superstition, such as astrology and the like. The sight of these people coming to Jerusalem would not astonish us; but the question with which they announced the purpose of their journey must surprise us. 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews?' These people are the first, after the shepherds of Bethlehem, who inquire after Christ. Magi and wise men are therefore the first-fruits of the heathen whom the Father draws to His Son. And it is fitting that it should be so. The wise and learned ought certainly to be the nearest to Christ; or, at least, those only deserve the name who are near to Him. All the knowledge which we possess out of Christ has value only as it leads us to Christ; and this is the surest proof by which we can ascertain whether it is really valuable or mere pretence.

I. How did the Magi come to Jerusalem? They themselves tell us 'We have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship Him.' They have seen a star, and from this they have inferred that the birth of the Saviour has taken place. Their knowledge of the stars, however valueless it may be in itself, has divulged something to them. Their hearts were true and honest; that was the reason. They were not the only persons who saw the star; there must certainly have been many other people of their calling who understood astrology as well as they did. But among all these not one came to Jerusalem. They, too, explained the appearance of the star, but with quite a different meaning. They as well as the Magi inferred the birth of a great king, with this difference only: to the others that great king was no more than a great king, who might indeed be very remarkable, but who did not specially concern themselves, and on whose account they would not move a foot. Our

Magi, on the contrary, saw in this King the Saviour whom they had to worship, and therefore they did not shrink from the long journey, but set forth without delay. So great a difference does it make whether we feel the need of a Saviour or not. There are many such stars which can and ought to lead to Christ, in the Church at large and in the life of every individual; but if the need for a Saviour is not felt, they are not recognised to be what they are—guide-posts to Christ.

The Magi may probably have heard also of the prophecies of Christ, as they were at that time widely disseminated in the East. But how was it that they understood them as they were intended, and not as the heathen historians and many of the Jews even understood them, to speak merely of a powerful king? They did so, because they felt their need of a Saviour. We do not understand all the prophecies of Christ in our hearts and lives, unless we feel a moral need of a Saviour.

II. But besides this, the need which they felt would have been of no avail, if the star had not really appeared. They could not make it appear. It was not their felt need which made them acquainted with Christ, but the free and undeserved mercy of God (S. John xv. 16). Their own journeying and haste would not have done it. But when God had once made the beginning, then their efforts were made availing: they came.

The star had an attraction for them. It was the drawing of the Father which they faithfully followed. He to whom Christ is really attractive also comes to Him. He is, however, attractive only to poor sinners. But the evidence of this attraction is our coming to Him. When we know that we could become more closely acquainted with Christ by means of prayer, seeking, endeavour, and the like, and do not employ any of these means, then it is not only that we do not come to Him, but it is a proof that we are not really interested in Him.

The Magi went a long way to Him; we often will not go a short one. They might easily have been able to find reasons for hesitating, and excuses enough if they had sought them. But it was of importance to them that a Saviour was born. Their expedition has certainly something adventurous about it. But this is not the question. The real question is, what sort of adventures we undertake. If Christ is the object of them, it does not signify at all if the means which God places in our hands appear extraordinary. Every one who wishes to belong to Christ must be prepared beforehand to be considered an enthusiast and fanatic. They had, as we see afterwards, no star on the way. But they did not for that reason go astray. A little light was sufficient for them. They came to

worship Him. They were then humble and lowly, and did not wish to have their own way. We must come to Christ in this manner to worship Him.

R. ROTHE.

The Visit of the Magi.

S. MATTHEW ii. 1, 2.

THE visit of the wise men of the East guided by a star to Christ has been from the very first connected with the Epiphany season. Originally Epiphany meant the birthday of Christ, but when, in process of years, the Church resolved to celebrate the nativity on the 25th of December, she did not therefore propose to abolish the Epiphany festival. On the contrary, she retained it, only in order that she might pay it more exclusive honour. Henceforth, the star, without losing any of its lustre, gained and grew in glory; for Epiphany became, as the word properly implies, not so much the feast of our Lord's birth, as of his manifestation to the Gentiles.

I. The visit of the Magi is one of the most beautiful incidents in the gospel. It has a flavour of its own, for the narrative, differing in kind from any other, is abrupt and sudden, almost as the event itself must have been; and has quite an earthly romance, as well as a heavenly mysteriousness about it. For who are these strangers from the East, and what means this unexpected homage? Of what sort again is the star which guides them to the lowly dwelling of the infant Saviour?

Two Roman historians expressly record the fact that at this very period there prevailed throughout the East a traditionary belief that some one was about to go forth from Judea, who should have universal dominion. It was the fulness of time, the world was big with expectation, and the arrival of the Magi was not nearly such a matter of astonishment and perplexity to the inhabitants of the city, as an ordinary reader of the gospel might be inclined to assume.

II. The star was a meteor light, the extraordinary handiwork of divine love and mercy, not the ordinary product of fiery vapour and the usual fires of the air. When the God of heaven and earth (who is Himself the bright and morning star), when he was born into the world, was it much that one of the highest angels—one of those who daily dip their robes of light in the glories of the Eternal Presence—should have glided unseen before the adoring eyes of those kings and sages of the East, bearing a wondrous lamp of light in his unsullied hands, and singing, yea shouting, in his inmost heart, for joy?

III. When they had opened their treasures, they presented their gifts; and the Church long after called to remembrance how that

each gift had been symbolical of the nature of the office of Him to whom the Magi had offered adoration. Fitting was it that to a king, they should have offered gold; and to Him who was very God, frankincense—as the fragrant substance which was daily burned on the altar of incense: the materials of those precious odours which set forth in emblem the prayers of saints; while myrrh was fitly His, as very Man invested with a mortal body. The Royalty, the Divinity, the Humanity of Christ, then, were the three things which these Eastern Magi confessed without confession, even by their very gifts.

IV. The star (1) fulfilled the prophecy of Balaam, (2) satisfied the hopes of the Magi, (3) guided them from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, (4) exercises us. And this is a sample—only a common sample of how God acts. His name is wonderful with whom we have to do. He will entrap the wicked in the work of his own hands—as in the case of Herod. He will make the pathway of the just brighter and brighter until they come to the perfect day, as in the case of the wise men.

J. W. BURGON.

The First Epiphany.

(*For Children.*)

Where is He that is born King of the Jews? S. MATTHEW ii. 2.

I. THE 'inn'—that is, the lodging-house of Palestine—is called a khan. Picture to yourself a fair-sized square court, paved and, of course, open to the sky. Then all around it are a number of large recesses, like small square rooms with stone floors, and without walls on the side nearest the square court. The floor of these rooms is about two feet above the level of the stone floor of the court. In this you have a large khan.

When travellers arrive at the khan to lodge for the night, their horses, camels, or mules, with their attendants, are put in the centre court, which is frequently very dirty, and they themselves take possession of one of the rooms. On the deewan, as the floor is called, they place their mats or rugs, if they have brought any, and there they sit to eat their food or smoke, and at length lie down to sleep.

It often happens that the portion of the khan where the cattle are placed is one of the caves with which the hills of Palestine abound, and sometimes the whole khan is built in a cave.

When Joseph and Mary came to the khan, all the little rooms in it were quite full, as so many people had arrived before them. There was therefore no room for them, so they had to find a resting-place either in the court or in the cave with the cattle, and it was there Jesus was born.

II. Another incident in that first Christmas-time was the visit of the Magi, or wise men, who came from the East to worship the infant Jesus. You remember that God guided them to Jerusalem by a star. When they came to the city, they no doubt expected to find all the people rejoicing and making such an ado over their new-born King; but, on the contrary, no one knew anything about it. So when they inquired, 'Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him,' Herod heard of it, and he became much troubled about it. 'What does this mean?' thought he to himself. 'These men have travelled long, weary miles to see and pay homage to one born King of the Jews; and they have done so because they have seen His star.' He knew he had not been born king of the Jews; he knew he had gained his crown by corruption and bloodshed; and he knew well that he had been a cruel tyrant, and that the people hated him. No wonder he was troubled when he heard there was one born king of the Jews!

People do not now object to have the Lord Jesus as a Saviour. They would like to know that Jesus would save them from all the punishment due to their sins. But then Jesus claims to be more than a Saviour—He claims the right to be King, and thus to reign in the heart, and to rule over the whole of the life. It is this claim we are so unwilling to yield to Him. If He would only save us from the punishment of sin, and allow us to do as we liked, and not in any way interfere with us in anything, so that we could continue committing acts of sin, and live contrary to His will; to engage in sinful pastimes and pleasures, and in no way owe Him allegiance, then people would readily accept Jesus the Saviour. But when He says, 'Give Me thine heart, and let Me set up my throne in it,' they say, 'No, I can't yield that yet.' They do not want Jesus to rule their lives, because He would make such a change in them. When Jesus was at last condemned to die, it was on the charge that He maketh Himself King. It is the only reason why He is kept out of the heart now, and why He is still thrust out and crucified.

A little girl was leaving church on a thanksgiving afternoon, at the close of one of our missions, when she turned to her mother and said, 'Mamma, I don't want to go yet; I wish to wait for a memorial card.' Her mother answered, 'But, my dear, they are only for young people who believe they have given their hearts to Jesus. Do you think you have?' In a moment the child replied, 'Oh, yes, mamma!' and then, after a little hesitation, she added, 'at least, most of it. You know I must keep some for you and papa.' That dear little child did not understand that by giving up all the heart to Jesus she would not be taking away any of her love from her father and mother; but that, on the contrary, she would by so doing

be able to love them ever so much more than she had ever done, and with a much stronger and truer affection. We cannot really love our parents as we should until the God of love fills our hearts with Himself, and rules in them.

When we think of Jesus as a babe, with no better birthplace than a corner of a dirty stable, surrounded by the most common of mankind; when we think of all He endured during the thirty-three years of His life, and then the awful death He died, could He have borne it all if He had not intensely loved us? No, He could not. Then surely such love could only wish and act for your truest and highest happiness. Jesus wants you to be very happy this Christmas, and therefore He says, 'Give Me thine heart,' because He knows that is the only way in which you may become truly happy.

J. STEPHENS.

The Star of Epiphany.

The star, which they saw in the East, went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was. S. MATTHEW ii. 9.

THE star of Epiphany is a star of hope—of hope for the science and wisdom of the world, that it may be aided to see its way to the manger at Bethlehem, and, by force of its own curiosity, patience, and zeal, be found ready to lay at the feet of the infant King its treasures so bravely won, so dearly prized,—its gold and frankincense and myrrh.

But alas! this hope of ours, which drew to itself of old the wisdom of the East, is found, in these later days, rather to repel than to attract much of the science and wisdom of the West. And this it unhappily does under all its three heads. For under every head it introduces, directly and inevitably, just those elements which scientific habits tend to dislike and to reject. For it proffers a solution of life's riddles, which, gracious and winning as it may be, yet lands us at once upon those expressions that have become so ominous and so uncomfortable—lands us upon what we call 'the supernatural,' 'the miraculous.'

I. Take, first, this divine consummation in the Perfect Manhood of Christ Jesus. This, if it is to guide, control, manipulate our life on earth, involves a steady and consistent introduction of the supernatural in among the daily affairs of nations and men. A supernatural event, the Birth and Resurrection of the Christ, is to insert its regulative dominion over human conduct. A supernatural issue, in a higher world, at the coming again of Him who has gone out of

our sight—this is to be the star by which we here in the flesh propose to direct our straying steps.

Modern wisdom is largely balked of its hope, of its star, by those obstacles that seem to its eye to becloud and encumber it. And very naturally; who can be surprised at it? We surely need not suppose science to be malicious, or vain, or scoffing, because it finds the miraculous uncomfortable and obstructive.

This must be allowed, and we ought to allow it generously; and yet we may still plead quietly with sciences, in its fits of natural impatience at discomfiture, asking it, first, the simple question, Do you think that your methods, based as they are on the conditions of physical, material nature, are necessarily universal? Are they applicable to every part of man? Are they co-extensive with all his nature?

'Of course not,' all genuine science answers: 'We never pretended they were. We are continually declaring ourselves agnostic—declaring ourselves ignorant of much that obviously must exist.'

You have learned, then, by long habit, to make the necessary allowances in your calculation for the habitual and normal action of spirit. But it is always possible to feel the shock, the jar, which shakes your methods of study whenever they knock up against this spiritual world. It makes itself felt whenever these methods approach their limits, as, *e.g.*, when they touch on original creation, or on real causes, or on points where the order of things makes any novel start on a new level, as when organic life appears on the top of inorganic matter, or, again, when man's free-will comes into view. At all these points, where spiritual creation makes itself specially obvious, your methods are habitually conscious of a jar: but, as long as the spiritual side keeps pretty closely to its usual forms, you have learned, by long practice, how to allow for all necessary friction,—how to omit it with safety from your calculation. Your scientific instinct warns you, with quick security, wherever there is an obstacle of the kind at hand, and you sheer off, and avoid collision. The problem is there always, at every step; but it can lie dormant, because you, and all men, have a mutual understanding. Every one understands what you are handling, and what you are proposing to ignore. All goes well so long as the spiritual forces present in nature and in man preserve their normal quantity and degree, behave according to their usual manner.

But suppose there is a crisis in that unreckoned spiritual world—suppose something occurs to disturb its normal proportion, to increase its quantity and bulk, to intensify its pressure—then this would throw you out, and your customary allowance for spiritual friction would be upset; your smooth methods would at once be sensitive of

an unforeseen shock; the instinctive regulations, by which you provided against the introduction of this alien subject-matter, would break down; there would be interference, jar, violence, miracle.

II. Why do we look for a crisis—for a change? Because we are sick, and blind, and halt, and maimed, and poor, and naked, and loathsome, and unclean; because, do what we will, we still slip back into this clinging tyranny, or still, for all our efforts, find ourselves lower and lower in these dark waters, and know that, if things remain as they are, we must drown at last in some muddy death.

Why do we look for a crisis—for a change? Because, blind and sick and filthy though we be, we yet have not lost all sense of a good God, who made us in His own image, long ago, not yet lost all memory of a heavenly city, and of shining gates, where run the crystal waters down the golden streets, a city where lies our only citizenship—a city towards which our pilgrim souls send out their sighs of vain desire. Yes, we have a home from which we came out.

We do not, indeed, pretend to have disposed of all perplexities that surround the question of miracle. But one thing we do most certainly claim; that, at least, the possibility of attributing our belief in miracle to savage wonder is disposed of finally, and for ever, so far as we go. Anyhow, that is not the explanation. It is a loose and ignorant slander. No Christian miracle responds to ignorant curiosity. All our miracle is bound up with the deepest necessities of our spiritual faith in the goodness and mercy of God. The very motives by which we cling to Christ prepare us for some divine action, which, if it is to save us, must be unique, abnormal, convulsive: for it can only be by some spiritual earthquake that our prison doors can be thrown open, and all our bonds fall off us.

H. SCOTT HOLLAND.

The Guiding Star.

And when they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. S. MATT. ii. 10.

I. THIS miraculous star, which guided these wise men to Christ, may be regarded as an emblem of the light of eternal truth, which God has sent, in His mercy and goodness, to guide us through this dark world to heaven. Truth is the eternal rule, the inner light, constantly present within us, unless, indeed, we wilfully close our eyes to it, which is ever telling us what we ought and ought not to do, and is figured to us by the miraculous light which as at this season guided these wise men to Christ, and filled their hearts with exceeding great joy.

Notice the conduct of the wise men when the star appeared to them. They were men who devoted themselves to the study of the visible works of the creation. They used the knowledge already given them, and then God vouchsafed them more. They were in the right attitude for receiving truth. They felt that the vain reflections of the human mind are very different from the light of heaven. They conferred not with flesh and blood, they began their journey in simple faith, they were determined to be enlightened, and they did not want to be flattered. They sought the truth with all their hearts, and they found it.

II. When the Magi reached Bethlehem they fell down and worshipped their King. Their act was the solemn but holy prefiguring sign of the future prostration of the heathen world before Christ—a type of the time when all kings shall fall down before Him, and all nations do Him reverence.

From the Church of England Pulpit.

Consecration.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary, His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him. And when they had opened their treasures they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.—S. Matt. ii. 11.

I SHALL not enter into the preliminary questions which beset this well-known story—as to who the wise men were, and how later legend developed them into 'the three kings' whose bones are believed to be enshrined in the Cathedral of Cologne; or again as to the nature of the star by which they were led, or yet again the symbolic meaning of the three gifts which they presented to the infant King of the Jews. These questions, in whatever degree important, can scarcely be called spiritual questions, and it is with spiritual questions that I would to-day endeavour to engage yonr attention.

Whatever more there may be—and there is much more—in the visit of the wise men to the manger-cradle at Bethlehem, the first historic contact between the Gentile world and Him in whom there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, there is at least this lesson of consecration. These wise men prostrated themselves before that little Child. They did not keep their wisdom to themselves. Of themselves they thought nothing. They had found an object more precious than themselves on which to lavish their treasures. They had no greater joy than in emptying themselves of their treasures, and bestowing them in humblest adoration upon Him.

EPIPHANY

I need scarcely remind you that the subject which we have chosen was in times past the delight of great artists. It expressed one of their deepest convictions at a time when art expressed truly the deepest spiritual convictions of the age. The 'Adoration of the Magi' sounds cold and formal as a mere art-designation in the catalogue of a National Gallery, but think of it as what it was with the earliest painters, before they began to lose their love of their subject in love of themselves and their technical skill—think of it as a recognition, or rather an overwhelmingly strong feeling of the truth that intellect and power are only worthily used when they are consecrated to God in Christ, and then we shall see what true preachers the great religious artists were in their day. Not that they were necessarily conscious of the fact that they were thus preaching, or felt that, as artists, they had any call to preach, but that being full of their theme, and, as we may truly say, inspired by it, they could not but so be painters as to be also preachers of righteousness. But now what do we mean by this thought of consecration to Christ? We would neither exaggerate the truth, nor yet fritter it away. We will not go so far as to say that it means in every case a consciousness of a call to be a reformer, or a teacher, or a protester, or to the visible eye, separate from the world; but we will say, for nothing less would be true—a haunting consciousness that nothing which we possess is our own, but that all our possessions—whether outward or inward—are at once the property and the gift of another, and must be given back to Him. Let us think of a few of the ways in which the call for a choice is practically made.

I. There is the answer—which is no answer—the answer of silent indifference. A young man comes to the University, and never dreams—cannot be brought to get so far as even to dream—of the importance of this part of his career. He lives as if he had no gifts, no treasures. He simply wastes them; not necessarily, like the prodigal, 'in riotous living.' We are not thinking now of such sad cases; but, as one ironical phrase puts it, by just 'doing nothing,' or, as another still more audaciously ironical, and suggesting still more food for thought and wonderment, simply 'killing time.' With this form of no-consecration we cannot argue. We can but appeal to whatever of conscience or of nobleness may be yet alive, 'If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace.' 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.'

II. Another form of what I call no-consecration is simple self-culture. No one will dream of identifying this with the waste, the aimlessness, the time-killing of which we have just spoken. Let us think for a moment what it is before we go on to think what it is

not. It recognises that we are endowed with a complex nature, every part of which is capable of being developed. We have powers of mind which can bring us into conscious contact with every form of greatness and beauty. And this development, this contact, are in themselves enjoyment of an exalted kind. They lift us, at least for the time, above pettiness and baseness. They indefinitely multiply our means of sympathising with others and of wisely doing them good. But this is short of consecration, and the Christian conscience tells us that it is far inferior to it. Consecration implies not only self-culture but self-surrender, and more than this, the joy of self-surrender. There may be consecration to a great cause, like justice or freedom. There may be consecration to an idea which we almost personify and even deify, like truth or beauty. But it is to a person—to some one greater, better, purer than ourselves—that consecration is at once most passionately and most perseveringly rendered. And never does consecration of self take a nobler form than when a young man prostrates himself before the feet of his Saviour, and offers to Him, in their prime, the fulness of all his powers. Happy they who, by the grace of God, return this answer and no other when the choice comes to them here, will you be of the world, or will you, like your Master, be not of the world?

H. M. BUTLER.

IV. OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

The Demand for Results.

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.
ISAIAH lx. 1.

WE hear much of speculation and intellectual difficulties which are tormenting the faith that is in us. And that man would be a fool who would attempt to deny or diminish their pressure or their anxiety. Yet it may be well to remember that such speculative difficulties are, with most of us, not so much the causes as the signals of a disturbance that already exists. They are signs that faith is already in trouble, has already lost its proper confidence in itself. If it were in sound and vigorous health, it would be but faintly conscious of the multitudinous problems that are always accompanying it, unsolved and impenetrable.

For faith is primarily a practice, not a speculative energy. It seats

itself within the will rather than within the reason; its proper method of solving questions lies in going steadily forward by the vigour of its own inherent vitality, and in finding, by this process, that in action the questions solve themselves. And it has the right to adopt this rough-and-ready method, just because its primary concern is not philosophy, but moral conduct; and it is, therefore, not essentially called upon to satisfy all the demands of the inquiring intellect.

But if once its own practical capacity to advance is lowered, then the questions that ever beset its path do not get worked off. The success of the counsel *solvitur ambulando* ceases. The problems, therefore, are no longer brushed aside; they remain and block the road.

I. Here we stand in Epiphany—the beautiful season in which we look to celebrate the manifested issues of the wonderful birth on Christmas Day. It has all happened; 'God is with us.' No greater event can ever transcend this; there can be no other whom we can look to see coming. Now, then, let the manifestation begin. Let the good news be felt abroad, be heard far and wide. Let us watch it breaking out on every side. That is our hope, our cry, 'Arise, shine!' The light is come, is here; the glory of the Lord is risen. Let the whole earth brighten under the broadening day! That is our Epiphany expectation; and it is this which is hit so hard now-a-days. It is this which is suffering so severe a rebuff—this natural demand, sanctioned by the feast that we celebrate, for broad, positive, encouraging, immediate results.

Results! The very word strikes so loud and ready a chord in our modern hearts. It is an age which clamours for results—quick and undeniable results. Here in England we always are profoundly susceptible to that commercial, practical cry.

There are huge areas of social and economic life which seem to lie wholly outside the range of Christ's work. Commerce, trade, property—these have entire departments which are ruled throughout by principles and habits which the Name of Christ has not yet touched, and can never sanction. Political and other changes, affecting deeply the wellbeing of our nation, travel along paths which are utterly independent of Christian influence. We seem often to be watching a society which goes on its way, creating its own story, just as if Christ were not here at all as a Power, or an Ideal, or a Goal. We miss the evidence of His dominant control over the affairs and doctrines of civilised man; and, in our dismay at this lack of evidence, we may be tempted to listen to a dark suspicion; to ask, Can it be that Christ had not anticipated the developments which society is taking? Is His Church powerless to cope with the new situation? or else, why is it so slow in understanding it, in handling it, or in

grappling with its obstacles? Has the work got beyond its capabilities? Where is the manifestations of its victory?

II. Let us attempt to recall the method of redemption proposed in Christ, and then see whether it does not somewhat relieve our present disappointment.

The method springs from the central principle that, wherever personality is in question, all possibility of renovation must of necessity come from within. No person can be reformed, remade, from without. A *thing* can be broken up, if it is spoilt, and made again. But in the region of personality this is impossible, for it would destroy that which makes personality what it is, *i.e.* undivided continuity of existence. A corrupted human race, then, must recover itself. No one can do that for it and from outside, not even God Himself. It must bring about its own moral recovery. It can indeed be assisted by outside influences, but no such assistance would create a renewal of character in one whose will was bad or awry. From within that will itself the renovating force of healthy action must spring, which alone can turn external assistance to good account. Therefore it was that, in obedience to this necessity, God must become Man, in order that man may, by God's grace, work out his own renewal.

And, if this be the law, what form of manifestation should we expect such a process to put forth? What would be the method of its Epiphany? Surely it would always repeat its first start. What was the start? Christ was the Start—Jesus Christ, a single point of unsullied light inserted within the weight of darkness; a single spot in all human nature seized, secured, held like a fortress, where the curative force of God could be lodged safe from all attack. The human body of Jesus Christ—that white point of light, that fortress spot held for God within the darkened mass—was a pledge and a security to God that the whole mass could yet be penetrated and redeemed, just because it now holds within itself the power to work out its own salvation. It was a pledge, a prophecy, a security! Yes: but all the slow process of penetrating the mass of the darkness has yet to be accomplished; and that process can only proceed by the gradual multiplication of these points of light. The Will of Christ must make itself ever new lodgements within the separate wills and bodies of men and women who yield Him admission; and in each, wherever He arrives and secures Himself a house, He becomes a new point of light. A new spot is seized and held for God. Point by point, spot by spot, He will creep and creep over the whole ground of night; but nowhere can He pass, except where men will yield Him free entry; for into the very core of their wills He must insert Himself, if ever He is to endow them with the energy and capacity of self-renewal.

Such Epiphanies as these are going on all round us. Points of light start out amid the night like stars that pledge to us the morning sun. Look up at them and watch them; listen to their message; though they move out upon our sights as it were in silence, yet there are voices to be heard among them, voices that pass from one to another and whisper that all is well. The Lord is with us; He is securing to Himself even now the world from which He seemed to have dropped out. Here and there signals break out which declare the persistence of His work. Those that have eyes to see may see; and seeing, they may wait and pray and possess their souls in patience.

H. SCOTT HOLLAND.

The Open Door of Missions.

Arise, shine, for thy light is come. ISAIAH lx. 1.

I. THE time is surely very rapidly approaching when the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ will be called upon in a way she has never been called upon before, to rise and to shine, and to show her light in the dark places of the earth. What we call the missionary work hitherto has been but a very fitful, a very uncertain, a very spasmodic illumination of the darkness. No one can say that the missionary work has ever occupied a very prominent place in the Church of Christ. No one can say that it was ever recognised as the main purpose for which the Church exists. But a change is coming—a happy change—and we all feel it. In our day a certain section of the Church, at any rate, is quite awake to this subject. Slowly but surely the whole body of the Church is going to rise and to shine. Zion will recognise that for this she was created; that if God has lit her candle, and shone upon her, it was entirely that she might reflect the light upon the earth, and that this missionary work to which she was called is no secondary claim, to be considered when all other claims have been met, but is the first claim, by comparison with others the only claim, to be met first and other claims postponed.

II. When you come to consider the missionary work of the last hundred years, your first reflection is: 'What a trifling effort has been made! What a fragmentary sum of money has been spent! What a paltry little company of missionaries have gone out! What a lukewarm interest has there been in the churches at home!' But your second thought when you survey the facts is: 'What marvellous results have come from these trivial efforts!' If you were to lift your eyes and survey the whole condition of this mission work, I think you would all agree in saying that it is simply miraculous. Our Lord

seems to be saying to us: 'Behold, I have set before thee a door opened which no man can shut.' 'Hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown.' A great variety of causes have been at work to produce this wonderful result. Trade and travel, as well as science—the science of language, the science of religions—have been working to open the world; even the wrath of man has been serving the purpose of God. Our Chinese wars, so iniquitous that no sane person can justify them, yet had the effect of opening the Chinese ports to the missionary; that mysterious Providence which in the last century plucked the great Indian peninsula from the Portuguese and the French, to whom it seemed to belong, and handed it over to us, so that one quarter of the heathen world has been put immediately under our control and we are responsible for it—a Providence like that seems to be like the hand of God moving in the cloud. And the Dark Continent has been penetrated with beams of light, and even in the desert has been prepared a highway for our Lord.

III. If we are to be a missionary church we must set our Lord Jesus Christ more constantly before our eyes; we must not allow other things so often to come between us and Him. Just as it is the power of the crucified Christ that touches the unconverted heathen, so it is the power of the crucified Christ that works in the heart of the Church and will not let it rest until it has compassed the earth. It was noticing upon the wall an image of the Crucifixion and the inscription under it, 'I did this for thee, what hast thou done for Me?' which awoke in Zinzendorf that mighty spirit which created the Moravian Church; and we who are accustomed to dwell in the constant presence of Him who died, are touched with the feeling of the world's infirmities and of our Saviour's power, and we must also—do not let us forget it—dwell in the presence of the risen Lord, be familiar with the touches of His spirit and the pleadings of His voice. After all, insufficient missionary interest is only another name for spiritual deadness.

R. F. HORTON

The Message of S. John the Baptist.

And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. S. Luke iii. 15, 16.

I. THE language of the text leads us to consider John as a messenger of God, great only in that character, great only as he acknowledges his calling and girds himself to the fulfilment of it. It

leads us to think, not of some man born in Bethlehem, or in Nazareth, but of the Christ, the anointed of God, who was to bestow the Spirit with which He was anointed upon men. Who this Christ was, no Evangelist tells us that John the Baptist guessed. S. John introduces Him, saying in direct words that he did *not* know. He knew what the office of the Christ was; what his was not. He could prepare the way for Him, by preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. That baptism, not John's wisdom, was to manifest the Christ to Israel.

II. John's message had all the qualities which prophetic message could have. It bore witness of its origin from One who knew what is in man. It appealed to all equally. It appealed to each man by himself. It went home to that in each which wanted remission and purification. It did its work. It was at once levelling and exalting. S. Matthew and S. Mark are so busy with their main subject, 'Prepare the way of the Lord,' that they can think of no other. For S. Luke, whose mind is occupied with the Gospel to the Gentiles—to all mankind—the clause, 'All flesh shall see the salvation of God,' was very important; it blended itself with the previous sentence; he could not divide them.

The words I have taken for my text announced One who would be endowed with a divine Spirit, and who would impart that Spirit. They declared this to be the distinction between Him and John, between Him and all other prophets. He who was not able to bestow this gift was not the King and Deliverer their fathers had looked for. He was not the King and Deliverer who could raise them out of their low estate, or who could confer any rights or blessings on mankind.

Strange is it to think of the contrasts which men have drawn between John and Jesus, as if the first were merely a severe preacher, and the last were all tolerance and pity; and then to read this description: 'Whose fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into the garner, but will burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable.' Yet was it not such an one as this that the people of Palestine wanted; one who could look into the heart of their society, into the heart of each man, and burn up its evils, and burn up his evils? One who could kindle a new and divine life within them? Would anything less than this divine fire, than this divine Spirit, have sufficed for their renovation? Will anything less than this divine fire, than this divine Spirit, suffice for our renovation? Will it avail us to talk of the meek and lowly Jesus? Must there not be One with a fan in His hand, to accomplish for us what no outward baptism, no preaching of repentance, has been able to accomplish? Is there such an One? I think there is,

for I accept this as a true sentence: 'Now when the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee am I well pleased.'

F. D. MAURICE.

V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

The Light of the Epiphany.

Then spake Jesus, saying, I am the light of the world. S. John viii. 12.

THIS Season of Epiphany is the special commemoration of those promises of God, that at last He would bestow on the world the blessing of spiritual light; but of all the holy days of the year it is the one which reminds us of the light which we have now. Things that, in other ages, neither Jew nor Gentile knew of, things that many kings and prophets and righteous men desired to see, and died without seeing, God has made our common heritage. To-day we remember the first steps and stages of that great manifestation by which we have been brought from darkness to light; and that light was Christ.

I. The wise men came on their journey from the East, seeking Him who was born King of the Jews. On one side were men, who, whatever they were, were personages of high name and account; there were wisdom, riches, great efforts; the earnest purpose and unsparing test of the serious and the thoughtful, who had come from far to seek their heart's need and hope. And what on the other side? Meekness, poverty, only humble purity and innocence; only a little Child with Mary His Mother. And here was the fulfilment of the prophecies which had stirred and shaken the East, here was the reward, the thankfully, adoringly recognised, of the anxious questioning, of the peaceful seeking. The question was answered, the promise was made good, what has been sought for has been found. There, under the mask of the meanest and most trivial lowliness, lies in all its power and eventfulness, the Divine reality. God's glories do not care to wait on the show of what we count greatness. Some of the poorest and most despised things of this world are the germs of what shall be great in the world to come.

II. That Epiphany was the pledge and augury of a gift of true and abiding light to the world, with which it is idle to compare any disclosure to man of the knowledge which most concerns him. Nothing can make this as if it had not been; those who turn their backs on it and refuse it, in word and speculation, cannot get away from it: we can scarcely put ourselves really in the place of those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, on whom unexpectedly, contrary to all that they had known and been used to, the light first shone. That light from above no unfaithfulness, no perplexity, no short-sightedness of man has blotted from our heaven, nor can ever banish from the knowledge of mankind. The time has come, in the revolution of centuries, to behold it, to be blessed with it, to be responsible for it. The New Year forces on us the inscrutable law of change which is necessary of our world and life; and which at last turns upon us all so stern a face. But the great commemoration which accompanies the New Year teaches us to think of this law as one of the conditions of our highest good. Only on these terms, only on this condition of mortality, which perhaps shoots through us like a sharp pain, is there the prospect for imperfect creatures of higher things. We lose what we value, we leave behind what we love. It is the price we pay for the possibility of improvement, for our own approach to the perfection of the Unchangeable. 'Thou fool,' says the Apostle, 'that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.' If better things are ever to come, the old must change and make room for them. R. W. CHURCH.

VI. ILLUSTRATIONS.

The King of the Jews.
S. Matt. ii. 2.

Erasmus thought that the Magi did not adore Christ with Divine worship (as not knowing that He was God), but only with the homage which was due to Him whom they acknowledged as the 'King of the Jews.' But the Fathers generally teach otherwise.

Our own Country.
S. Matt. ii. 12.

Our country is Paradise, to which, after having come to the knowledge of Christ, we are forbidden to return by the way by which we came. We have left our country by the way of pride, of disobedience, of following the things that are seen, of tasting forbidden fruit; but it is needful that we should return to it by sorrow, by obedience, by despising the things that are seen, and by restraining the lusts of the flesh. We

return, therefore, to our own country by another way, since we who have departed from the joys of Paradise by carnal pleasures, must return to them by sorrows.

The Gifts of the Magi.
S Matt. ii. 11

S. Leo says: Frankincense they offer to God; myrrh to man: gold to the King: honouring with full intention the Divine and Human Nature in unity: because they believe with their hearts, they witness it by their gifts.

The Light of the Church.
Isa. lx. 1.

There is a little church on a lonely hillside where they have neither gas nor lamps, and yet on darkest nights they hold Divine service. Each worshipper, coming a great distance from village or moorland home, brings with him a taper and lights it from the one supplied and carried by the minister of the little church. The building is thronged, and the scene is said to be 'most brilliant.' Let each one of our lives be but a little taper—lighted from the Life of Christ, and carrying His flame—and we shall help to fill this great temple of human need and human sin with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

The Light of the Heathen.
Isa. lx. 1.

At a Church Missionary meeting the Bishop of Moosonee, furnishing proofs of the growing civilisation of the Indians, said :—

'I am here to speak of the conversion of men to God through the work of the missionaries, and I can tell you of men who evidence by their lives that they have been born again of the Holy Spirit of God. While speaking some time ago to an Indian, I said to him, "My friend, I should be glad if you would give me a picture of the Indians as they were before they received Christianity." I took down the man's words in reply from his own lips, and they were these:—"Before we were Christians we were very, very wicked; we knew nothing save the devil and the devil's works. We lied, we stealed, we conjured; we thought we could prophesy. The Indians robbed men of other tribes; the Indians robbed each other. Their lives were very, very wicked."'

Gone into the World of Light.
Isaiah lx. 19.

Never since the great minstrel of the border was borne from Abbotsford to Dryburgh Abbey has the valley of the Tweed been so moved as when Sir David Brewster was carried to his tomb in the old abbey of Melrose, amidst sorrowing crowds of friends and neighbours, and representatives from the seats of learning and science. There he rests till the resurrection morn, and the stone that marks

the spot where he lies bears the simple and appropriate words—'THE LORD IS MY LIGHT.'

An Inscription on a Tombstone.

ISAIAH lx. 20.

OF all the inscriptions in the necropolis of Glasgow, none strikes a visitor so much as the texts of Scripture inscribed on the monument of Dr. Beattie, who died in his fortieth year. One gives the mortal side: 'Thy sun shall go down while it is yet day;' the other turns the medal, and we read the inscription, full of immortality: 'Thy sun shall no more go down: for the Lord God shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.'

Outlines for the New Year

A New Year's Confidence.

It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness.

LAMENTATIONS iii. 22-23.

THIS is one of those very bright thoughts which lie across this dark book, like an April ray upon a retiring cloud. There is no book in the Bible which is more characterised by the illuminations of sorrow.

And you will always find it so in the book of life. The sweetest promises stand out in contrast against the blackest background.

We are come, by God's grace, to a New Year. But there are things 'newer' than the year. And why are 'new' things always pleasant to us? Because the old are so full of disappointments and shame: because we are tired of what, through our sins, is so humiliating and unsatisfying; and because hope does its proper duty, and paints a better future, and makes all things plain before us in their ranges. Therefore we are glad of a New Year.

And we may be very thankful that there are these periods and epochs in life, these foldings down of pages we have read, and openings of the new leaves of another chapter. They equip us: they give point and definiteness to new intention: they offer fresh feelings: they take us out of grooves: they stir up in us our immortality.

Do not think little of a New Year. Cherish its poetry and its sensibility. Sanctify it.

It carries a great responsibility and power with it, a New Year.

But there are things 'newer' than the year. They were before the year. They were before all years. They will outlive the year. The year will grow stale; but these always sustain their vigour and their elasticity. The New Year will presently be the Old Year; but these are always young!

Let us stand a moment upon this isthmus of time and ask, What

is the past? What is the present? What is the future? 'Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.'

What, then, of *the past*? 'Mercy.' 'Mercy.' Do you know what 'mercy' means? The root of the word is two things—'misery' and 'heart.' It means a '*heart for misery*.' What is a heart for misery?' God in Jesus.

And sin is misery. There is no suffering, believe me, like sin. That would scarcely be a suffering in which there was no sin. The suffering which comes straight from heaven, with no touch of man or sin in it, is a very light and easy suffering. It is in proportion as there is sin in it that it is suffering indeed.

Then what is 'mercy?' A heart to forgive sin, to deal tenderly and lovingly with sin. That is your past. Mercy upon sin; a gentle, loving, patient Father's heart on a poor, weak, sinning, unworthy child. That makes all the retrospect. You can analyse your history into two words: *Sin* and *mercy*. 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed; because His compassions fail not.'

And what is *the present*? There is no real present but God. God is one eternal *now*. The past, the future, the present, all settle Him in that grand 'I AM.' What we call 'present' is always made up of a memory and an anticipation. It is the pleasure which is just gone, or the pleasure which is just coming. It is the pain of the last moment, or the pain of the next moment. That is our present.

But what is God's *now*? 'Faithfulness.' He cannot change. He has spoken the word, and that word stands for ever and ever. 'Great is thy faithfulness.' All that is gone puts its seal to that.

'Faithful' chastenings! 'faithful' comfortings! 'faithful' to me, and all my wants! 'faithful' to Himself, and all His undertakings!

Here we all are, this day, through 'faithfulness.' 'I am God, I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.'

Find all your arguments in God; find all your evidences in God; find all your future in God.

Everything is uncertain. A great many will go before this year is over; but He does not go. He is 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.'

Many things have been disappointments; but let any one stand up, and say, Have you, this last year, ever once trusted in God, and not found your expectations outdone? Has God once disappointed you?

Many that promised fair, proved false; but He, 'loving His own,

which were in the world, loved them unto the end.' And here we are, the monuments of 'faithfulness' this day. We owe it all to 'faithfulness.'

God made a covenant, and we are in that covenant. He made a covenant with Christ, and we are in that covenant. And God has kept His covenant. 'The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day!'

'My "faithful" God! my "faithful" God! I have been very *faithless* to Thee; but Thou hast been all "faithfulness" to me.'

And *the future*? I will not put a finger to lift the veil, for it is spread in great love and wisdom; but we will look, not at the future, but at the God of the future. There is no veil there! That veil is rent!

When we think of the future, we always see it in a mass; but it will not come in a mass; but in multitudes of little bits. We see a mountain: it will come in grains of sand.

How 'new!' Every morning will have its evening, and every evening will have its morning; and each day and each night will be holden and balanced with exquisite accuracy. Each day will have a duty,—a trial,—a temptation,—a strength,—a joy. You may not see them all; but they will be all there, and all in an exact and proportionate measure.

And 'every morning,' as you arise, you will wake to meet 'new mercies' newer than the dawn.

See how they will be all 'new.' They will be 'new' as God makes 'new'—the old renovated; the happy associations of an old thing combined with the spring-like delight of the 'new' thing.

Just as 'the new heart' is the old heart with all its old affections and character, the same renewed and consecrated.

And 'the new heavens and the new earth' are the old atmosphere and the old ground purified, and made beautiful, and perfect.

So God's 'mercies every morning' are the dear old 'mercies' of yesterday (who would wish to give them up, the dear old 'mercies' of yesterday?) clothed in a new garb as the occasion needs.

And they are 'new,' because they were forfeited yesterday by our sins. But they come, new-bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

And they are 'new,' because 'new' light is thrown upon them, and our old hearts have been renewed to see them better; and we find some 'new' graces in the old things unseen before.

And they are 'new,' because they can be dedicated anew, used for 'new' services and 'new' love.

And 'new,' because of the 'night of heaviness' which 'endured but for a night;' 'but joy cometh in the morning!'

OUTLINES FOR THE NEW YEAR

Oh that our new-born piety every morning might match with our new-born 'mercies'! Oh that we could perceive, each morning, all the dear faces that meet us,—the familiar affections, and all that nature paints,—and all the happinesses which bestrew our path,—and all God's forgiveness, and all God's favours and promises, and God's presence—as 'new' things, to be taken, to be studied, to be admired, to be echoed back in praises and homage,—just as a star new created! A creation! a creation for me!

We shall best take our reflection of God, and be like Him, if we are always trying this year, to go on, every day, to some 'new' thing; some 'new' attainment in the Divine life; some 'new' work done, and dedicated to Him; each 'new' morning finding its echo in a 'new' trait of holiness! And oh, what a standard we should set! —to what heights we should reach—before the year is over! And this we will do.

Now, God's 'mercies' are 'new,' with the opening year, permit your preacher to put it to you, seriously and pointedly: What *new* thing will you take in hand this year for God? It may be a 'new' way of doing a former thing, or it may be a 'new' thing altogether, it does not matter, they are equally 'new.'

A 'new' affection will make an old prayer, or an old relation, or an old duty quite 'new.'

But do not let this morning pass, without setting a keynote, a right precedent about every morning of the year. And think and plan—on this first Sunday of a New Year—some one distinct step onward; some movement higher; some neglected thing resumed; some untried thing experimented; some old wound healed; some self-denial; some work of love; some Christ-like thing.

Something 'new' for the God of all your 'mercies,' which have been so true, so continuous, so increasing, so many, so wonderful to yourselves—to you and yours—for time and for eternity.

And, as each day this year calls you to 'new' labours, and 'new' conflicts, and 'new' ambition, may the God of all mercy accept, and fulfil in you that beautiful prayer of Isaiah: 'Be Thou their arm every morning!'

J. VAUGHAN.

The New Year.

Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good. GENESIS xxxii. 12.

WE are now crossing the threshold of a new and untried year. What will befall us during its progress, no one knows. We are like the captain of a war-ship, sent out with sealed orders.

Those orders tell him the direction in which he is to sail; but he is commanded not to open those orders till he reaches a certain latitude. We begin the year as we begin our correspondence. What letters the post will bring to us during each of the three hundred and sixty-five days of the coming twelvemonth, we cannot for a moment guess. Nor can we any more surmise what will be the events of each one of those days.

But there is one post-mark I can already read upon the intelligence that will come from day to day to you who are real believers. That post-mark, stamped in clear and legible type, is the motto of our text. To each of you who is joined to the Lord by the blood of the covenant, the Lord sends this morning a new year's salutation. The spirit and burden of this salutation is, 'Thou shalt not be afraid of evil tidings.' 'I will deal well with thee.' 'I will surely do thee good.'

We, like Jacob, are going forth to meet unknown difficulties. We are to meet, as it were, an Esau in the future. That you may fully understand the prayer of our text in all its rich and varied meaning, I shall ask you to notice three particulars respecting it.

Notice,

I. The promise itself.

The very brevity of the promise is its recommendation. We are apt to complain of our bad memories. But we can all carry away those six golden words, 'I will surely do thee good.'

Temporal good, *spiritual* good, and *eternal* good the Lord Jesus has promised to you and to all His believing and faithful people. And now to make *the promise itself* more clearly sure, let us examine,

II. Our warrant for pleading it.

What was Jacob's warrant for pleading the promise? It was the fact that the Lord had given him the promise. Twice over, in one short prayer, Jacob thus pleads with God: 'O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, Thou saidst unto me, I will deal well with thee;' 'Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good.' Now this is a plea which God encourages us all to make. 'Put Me in remembrance,' says God. 'Plead thou, that thou mayst be justified.' How effective that kind of prayer was in Jacob's case, you well know. The result was, Esau's wrath was turned away, and the lives of Jacob, of Rachel, of Leah, and of their households, were all spared. Jacob and Esau met each other with kisses and in peace.

The great thing, then, for us to do is to ascertain that we are in the path of duty, and then we may boldly claim the divine protection under the difficulties that may arise. The Apostle Paul had many trials at Corinth; but Paul could appeal to God and cry, 'Thou

saidst, Fear not, Paul; no one shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city.' While in the storm in Lake Gennesareth, the disciples were in great danger of their lives; but they, too, could plead they were in the path of duty, because it was at Christ's own command they had entered the boat to cross over to the other side. In this way, then, learn to fetch arguments from God's own promises, and thus to lay your case before Him in fervent prayer.

III. The persons to whom the promise belongs.

It belongs to Jacob. It belongs to Israel. It belongs to all the spiritual seed of Jacob. It is said of all true Israelites, of all 'who seek the Lord,' that they shall not want any good thing. To all, and to each of you, therefore, who, like Jacob, have wrestled with Christ in prayer, and who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus for salvation, the Lord God says, 'I will surely do thee good.' What good? To the pious parent He says: 'I have heard thy prayers. I have seen thy tears. I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed and My blessing upon thine offspring. I will surely do thee good.'

Instead of being perplexed and dismayed when poverty, or difficulty, or sickness harasses your path, and instead of asking, with Gideon, 'If God be for us, why then is this evil befallen us?' rather rejoice, and count it all joy when ye fall into these temptations and trials. Confide in God's judgment, and not in your own. Will not a wise father choose far better for his infant son than that infant can choose for himself? We must always distinguish between what is pleasing and what is profitable. We must also look to the end of everything. Lazarus in his lifetime received what the world calls 'evil things,' and the rich man 'good things.' But had we known both those men before death, we should have taken a very different view of the poverty and distress of Lazarus and of the wealth and luxury of Dives. All is ill that ends ill. All is well that ends well. And with regard to every Christian believer, we know it shall be well with him, and with regard to him everything that happens is for his good—his *temporal* good, his *spiritual* good, and his *everlasting good.*

C. CLAYTON.

A New Year's Motto.

The power of an endless life. HEBREWS vii. 16.

GOING out, as we do this day, from a humbling past into the mysteries of an unknown future, there is one wish which will, probably, be in many hearts: 'O that I could put more force into

my life! Life has been such a poor, weak thing to me, with such feeble efforts, and such small attainments, and so little influence! Would that I could live a life of force, a life of "power;" "power" over myself, "power" over others, "power" to do some great work for God.'

It is to meet that thought, that I have selected my motto for the year, because it contains a principle which I believe to be the great secret of a strong, effective, powerful life,—the endlessness, the eternal continuity of everything which goes to make what we call 'life.'

Let me explain what I mean. Not only are we ourselves immortal; but every act, and word, and thought, is immortal too. It is not merely that they all live on—fresh as at their first date—in the mind of God, and in the annals of the Recording Angel, to meet us again at the judgment-seat; but besides and beyond this, every act, word, thought, begets another act, another word, another thought; and that again another and another, in a succession which never stops.

We talk of ends, but where are ends? It may be an end in relation to the past; but is it not a beginning in relation to something which is to come? Ends are all means.

As the parent lives in the child, each event lives in the next which springs forth. Nothing perishes. Annihilation is a word; but it is a word without reality. The whole history of our world is one interminable chain, made up of myriads of links,—of which each is an essential part; and, in a strange and incredible degree, all connected each with the other.

The thing which seems to die, you little know where it will live again. There are resurrections of everything. In our forms, the outside decays; but what is within, lives on. There is no limit. Thousands of years may have rolled on; but what we once did, or said, little as we thought of it, survives. It overleaps the grave. The trail,—for evil or for good,—stretches on to other worlds. And it is true of all that is gone; and it will be true of all that is to come; and it will be inscribed on every moment of the opening year, and on all that opening represents,—'It is an endless life!' You stamp everything you create with your own immortality.

It is evident what a character this gives to every incident of our being! With what amazing and tremendous power it invests what we might call 'the trifles of a day,' if they are to live, for ever and ever, in their boundless consequences!

It is to this thought I wish to address myself.

The words were first spoken of Christ. But, like every other grand possession, they belong to us through Him.

How 'endless' His 'life!' How ineffable the 'power' of it! S. John had a just conception of it, when he said, with literal truth,

that if 'all the things which Jesus did, were written (in all their expandings), he supposed that even the world itself could not contain the books which should be written.'

A 'Priest' He was, not according to the rules which bind and limit human law, 'not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.'

What is the history of all the Church, what is the history of the whole world, spiritual and physical, what is the life of every soul, but, in some way, direct or indirect, the issuings of those three-and-thirty years, which Christ lived upon the earth? What do we copy, what do we trust in, upon what do we hang all our peace, and all our hope, but on something in that illimitable 'life'? And why does anything live?—why will it live for ever? 'Because He lives,'—'lives, to make intercession for us,'—lives, Himself, essential life; and, by union with that 'life,' whatever has life indeed lives!

What will this year be? Will it go on to its grave?—will it be a happy year? Could it be,—what would our eternal life be,—but that He lives again, in all that is beautiful, and true, and happy, and holy? Whatever lives, lives by Him, here, and for ever. I sum it all up when I say, 'The power of Christ's endless life.'

That which is true of Him infinitely, is true of us also, through Him, according to our measure and degree. We live a 'life' that cannot die: and everything that makes that life is 'endless.'

Let me follow that track of thought a few steps.

I. Let me say a word to qualify, if not correct, a very prevalent idea, which persons have, respecting the life of their body. Many think of their souls, indeed, as immortal; but of their bodies, as belonging only to this present world, and perishable. Your bodies are to live for ever. This is the great resurrection-truth, which characterises the Christian religion. They are to moulder: so is the grain of wheat. But in the grain of wheat there is the germ of seed, which never dies, but springs again, and is the new plant; another, the same. And there is a germ still in the decaying body, so infinitesimal, perhaps, that no eye can see it; but it will spring again, another, the same! Your bodies will live for ever!

And is there not 'power' in that realisation of the body's 'endless life'? Will it not help you to treat that body respectfully, chastely, modestly, if, whenever you look at it, you realise that you are to carry that body into the courts of the Most High God, and to wear it for ever in God's presence?

And does not it take away a great part of the deeper sorrow of life, and invest with most comforting vividness, the reunion which is coming, to believe, and to remember, and to be sure, that we shall see exactly that dear face again, and embrace that very form, in all

its sweetness? Will it not give 'power' to this year, as it runs its course,—'power' for consolation, 'power' for hope, 'power' for love, 'power' for holiness, 'power' for physical action—if you take with you the recollection of the body's 'endless life'?

Or, on a subject near akin to this—

II. The friendships, the affections, the communions of the present world, if He is in them who makes the eternity of everything—they are not made for time. The parent, the partner, the child, the brother, the sister, the friend who is gone, is not less parent, partner, child, brother, sister, friend, because the veil is drawn for a little while. They live. They are yours. It is only a parenthesis in the immortality of a true affection, made matter of faith for a little while, preparatory to a higher fruition. Do not mar the happiness of your enjoyment of love by thinking it will ever cease. A pious love is as sure, and as abiding, as the throne of God!

Hallow it. Use it. Rest in it. Do not be afraid to make it part of your heaven. It will only elevate you. It will do you good. You will feel the power of love's 'endless life.'

Has it ever happened to you to kneel by a sick-bed, and to ask—Oh how earnestly!—for the life of that dear one who lay there so painfully? Was the prayer answered? That dear one died! Was the prayer unanswered? 'They asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest them long life, even for ever and ever.'

III. Prayer is a thing which never dies. It may occupy a moment. You say it, and you forget it. But it is gone up, and it is registered in heaven. God looks at it. It is still in His faithful keeping. And long after it has passed from all human memory, and after the very lips that uttered it are cold, that prayer lives on! And answers, years to come, down many generations, will prove 'the power of its endless life.'

What a fugitive thing is a thought! It scarcely comes, when it is flown! For ever you may have it. You may arrest it; you may eternalise it. Ask God that that thought may not cease. It will come back, back! That thought that just glanced through the mind; that thought of a promise; some great truth. It will come back when least you look for it. Perhaps, in some dark passage; perhaps, on a sick-bed; perhaps, in a dying hour. And the slightest association will awaken it. A flower, a scene, a breath of air! Have you never felt it? Have you never felt it with some thought, and found that in that thought there was 'the power of an endless life'?

And if that thought clothes itself in language, where may not the word travel? It may be repeated. It may cross seas; it may visit some far-off land; it may touch a heart; it may guide a step; it may put things in motion which shall move other things in others.

And who shall measure one word's 'endless life,' and its living power?

And all the work that you do. The work itself may cease, and the hand that did it hang lifeless! But the consequences of that work, will they ever cease? Does not each raise its little wave, which again moves another wave, in circles, which go on and on, upon a shoreless sea?

The works themselves,—do they not live? Are they not preserved, that we may lay them at our dear Lord's feet, when He comes? Do they not determine our states in the never-ending ranges of the blessed? Will they not be the accurate representatives, then, of those degrees? Will they not, in another world, reflect themselves again?

Oh! it is either a grand, comforting, or it is an overwhelming, shuddering thought, that, after we are dead and gone, all the things that we have said and done will be producing their harvest for good and evil to the end of time! and that we may be held responsible, before God's judgment-seat, for all those results; and we may be regarded and treated as their responsible authors!

It is a fine conception which was made by a great philosopher,—that 'every time we speak, or perhaps every time we move, we make a vibration upon the air, which may vibrate, again and again, and repeat itself till it records itself upon a tablet, somewhere, invisible, in the fields of immensity.' Every impression stands there stereotyped, waiting for us, till we come to see it!

IV. And ourselves. We are not eternal, for we have a beginning. God is eternal. But we are immortal.

We talk of years—'threescore years and ten'—and we call it 'man's term of days.' And so it is upon this earth. But there is no 'term of days' on the other side! Death is only one event in our immortality; a change, a metamorphose, no more! Death destroys nothing. 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' The body and the spirit will separate for a little while: then they will be joined again; and we shall be the same, identically the same as we are now; transformed, spiritualised, glorified; but the same. To be recognised; to feel the same; to be the same; to be seen the same!

And the life which you have received in trust, you can never lay down. You exist, and you must exist, and nothing you could do could ever prevent your existing—as long as God exists!

Oh! into what an unfathomable gulf does this thought plunge us! In what a mystery it enwraps us! With what sublimity it invests us! Who can think out the problem of that thought, 'My immortality!'

impress, once for all—for all ages of time, and for all races of mankind—of His self-manifestation in the three great elements of Deity, wisdom, power, love. They must be made to see how very near He is to them in their life—physical, moral, spiritual—individual, national, civil, social, ecclesiastical. This is the meaning of Sinai and the wilderness. This is that necessary interval between Egypt and Canaan, between a state of serfdom and a state of self-government, by means of which a horde is to be made a nation, and a crowd of fretful children an army of vigorous, experienced, religious men.

Egypt behind—Sinai before—Canaan beyond—this is the exact account of the position of Israel when God said to him, 'This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.' Redemption was the starting-point of the new: from it all that follows shall take a new character, a new life.

The text is chosen, all will understand, not with a view to historical retrospects, but to the circumstances of this day, and of this congregation—kept alive by Him who created, to take part in the public worship of the first Sunday of a new year. 'This shall be to you the beginning of months: the first month of the year to you.'

I. The idea of a new start is naturally attractive to all of us. We are fatigued, we are wearied, we are dissatisfied, and justly so, with the time past of our lives. Oh for a gift of amnesty and of oblivion! Oh for some one to say to us, 'The past is gone and done with—nothing shall come back from it to scare, to encumber, or to accuse, —God and man have agreed together to bury it in the earth, to drown it in the depths of the sea!' Let us have a 'beginning of months' once again; let this be indeed 'the first month' of a second first year!

There are senses, indeed—we all know it—in which this is impossible. The continuity of life cannot be broken. Neither lapse of time, nor division of time; neither transition from childhood to youth, nor from youth to uttermost age; neither change of place, nor change of position, nor change of circumstance, nor change of companionship; neither joy nor sorrow; neither prosperity nor disappointment; neither pain nor love (the two most powerful factors in man's life) can snap in twain the unity of this being, or make me, save for a few rare and fallacious moments, so much as dream that I am not the thing I was. When any accidental evidence comes to me out of the past—the sight of an old letter, to me or from me—the greeting of a former schoolfellow, unseen for twenty or thirty years—I start as I recognise my present self in the mirror of that past—the same 'mixture of a man'—the same good points, whether of mind or heart, which I hoped were new—the same bad

points, whether of feeling or character, which I flattered myself were the creatures of circumstance, recent, accidental, evanescent. I seem to understand—and it is no pleasant discovery—in such confrontings of the old self and the new, how it is that Scripture is able to fix that character which to us appears ever dissolving—how it may be possible for God in the great day, without witnesses, without a jury, to judge a man as one thing all along, all through, and not many—even to write his epitaph, as He has done for so many in the pages of His Book—'He did that which was good,' or, 'He did that which was evil,' 'in the sight of the Lord'—his name, and his mother's name, and his birth, and his burial!

There is a continuity, a unity, an identity, which annihilation only—nay, not annihilation—could destroy. And there are those who overlook this—deal too lightly, too flippantly, with this re-beginning which is our text—are startled, almost angry, if they find the Israel of Sinai bewraying by his murmurings his identity with the Israel of Egypt's flesh-pots, or the Israel of Canaan itself dwelling contentedly amidst 'abominable idolatries' which he was commissioned and charged and set there to exterminate. Against this false teaching we must earnestly warn such as will hearken. It will come to us, most often, in the garb of evangelical doctrine, true and scriptural and salutary in its principle—wrong only, yet most wrong, in its inferences and its corollaries.

II. 'The beginning of months' is made so by an Exodus. The Passover, the sprinkling of sacrificial blood, the faith thus evidenced, the part thus taken, the choice thus made, the lot thus cast in with God and His people as against Egypt and its 'pleasures of sin for a season'—this was the starting-point. Brethren, it is so still. Redemption, the Redemption of the world—undertaken as at this season, completed on Calvary, by our Lord Jesus Christ—this is the groundwork of the new life. It is no re-commencement of the life to write 1873 for 1872 in our books or on our letters. This is indeed a change marked in sand, written in water—a mere name, a mere fancy, if we treat it as anything but just a signal or symbol of God's call and of our duty. We waken in 1873 as we slept in 1872. This is nothing. If there be in any of us a real desire for change—for a life different in kind from the former—for a life higher, nobler, purer, more real, more consistent, more spiritual—plant your foot firmly upon redemption. See the Paschal Lamb bearing the sins of the world. Behold Him, Divine and Human, undertaking to deliver man, coming into the world to save sinners, making atonement for us, opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers. View the enterprise in this large, bold, broad way. Believe that it was successful. Believe that your sins were there.

Bring them, lay them, leave them there. See God your Father in His Son Jesus Christ; and doubt not that He who spared not Him will spare nothing else that is good.

DEAN VAUGHAN.

A New Year's Motto.

I am Thy servant. PSALM cxvi. 16.

THE great secret of life is to know and remember all its bearings. And therefore the first thing we have to do, to-day, is to settle well with ourselves, on the threshold of the year, what are the relationships in which we stand, and how do we fulfil them?

Every one's primary relationship must be to God. If that relationship be not recognised and fulfilled, what hope can there be for the rest?

So that, at this moment, if any one, in the retrospect of the past year, is conscious that he has failed in any of his relative duties to man, he will act wisely if he trace it up to its first cause, and see whether the root of the failure does not really lie in the non-performance, or the ill-performance, of his duty to God? Secure that, and the whole body of the machinery of life will adjust itself.

It may sound strange to some, but our highest relationship to God is the relation of service. It is above sonship. Sonship makes service; but service does not make sonship. The end of sonship is service. Of the regeneration in your baptism this was made the crown and the climax: 'That you should continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto your lives' end.'

David was a great and powerful king. But that was not his boast; but, 'I am Thy servant.' Three times he uses the words. And in the verse from which my text is taken, he plainly delights in it. He emphasises and repeats it; and he likes to think that his mother was the same before him: he looks upon service as an hereditary privilege. 'O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid.'

It is the singularly beautiful motto of the heir-apparent to the English throne, derived from one of the finest acts of history—*Ich dien*—'I serve!'

S. Paul places it above his apostleship, and all his titles, 'A servant of Jesus Christ.'

And the great name of the Son of God Himself—in prophecy—was 'Thy Righteous Servant.' And all His life, not with His lips only, but with every action, He testified it—'I am among you as He that serveth.'

And to what are we all training up, and for what do we look as the highest bliss of heaven, but that in a sense—to which all have aspired, but none have reached—we shall be able to say, 'His servants shall serve Him!'

Our creation gives us the opportunity to serve Him: our redemption gives us the motive to serve Him: our sanctification gives us the will and the power to serve Him: our eternity gives us the place and the capacity to serve Him.

So the far end of all life is serving. He who has not begun to serve, has not begun to live. And, as life goes on, service deepens. And for ever, in the Divine language, life and service are the same thing, acting and re-acting each upon the other. The more life, the more service; the more service, the more life,—till life will be all service, and all service life.

And plainly the method of God's government (and Christ distinctly laid down the law) is, that whatsoever is the highest shall stoop the lowest. So that if we could watch an archangel, I believe we should see him stooping lower than an angel; and a saint more than both; and Christ more than all.

And everything in heaven and earth, the higher its degrees, the humbler its service.

Say I not well, then, that this should be the waking thought of the New Year? and that he begins it with the best promise who enters on it with the deepest conviction, 'I am Thy servant'?

I. 'I am Thy servant.' So personal, so simple, so absolute. The 'I' losing itself in the 'Thy,'—man and God in their proper place: the climax 'servant.' 'I am Thy servant.'

And if any one's heart say, 'But this is to put bondage first,' I answer this: Service is the instinct, service is the necessity of our nature. From the lowest to the highest, every part of creation serves something.

You serve the world; you serve business; you serve pleasure; you serve self; you serve sin,—till God, revealing Christ to you, makes you free from these masters. But still you must serve; you cannot help but serve.

And therefore, like the Jewish slave, who entered into a voluntary compact, and fastened himself to his master's door, in token that he might be his servant for ever, you made a willing covenant to serve God. You could not help it. You loved Him so for your own sweet liberty!

And service is the child of love. So, by the most willing act you ever did, you enlisted into His service. And never was there a freer feeling in all the world than that which now says: 'I am Thy servant.'

II. As respects service done directly to God Himself, and not

wider scope for the exercise of our purest energies. They are more satisfying, more permanent.

III. Those who have learned this truth will find in my text a good motto for the New Year. It is true that we cannot reach perfection on this side of the grave; but is it a bad thing to aim at it? Consider a moment. If we do not aim at perfection, what shall our object be? You know very well that we cannot allow ourselves any sin without vitiating the whole moral purpose of our lives. The simple truth is, that not only every Christian man, but every moral man, of any religion you please, must aim at perfection according to his knowledge. If Jesus Christ had never spoken this command, it would have been forced upon us by the necessity of the case.

It is clear that we are bidden to emulate our heavenly Father in the quality, not the extent, of His perfection. His faculties are infinite, and far beyond ours. We cannot emulate His wisdom, or knowledge, or power. But we have our own small measure of these things, and we must try to be as perfect in our sphere as He is in His. Perfection has nothing to do with magnitude. A small object may be as perfect as a large one. It is conceivable that we might be perfect with the divine perfection, though our nature is so much less extended than the divine. With the help of the Holy Spirit we can all of us improve ourselves this year. Those who have not tried hitherto will try now; and those who have tried already will try the more. So shall we be prepared for every possible event.

DEAN LEFROY.

First Sunday after Epiphany

Scriptures Proper to the Day.

EPISTLE	ROM. XII. 1-5.
GOSPEL	S. LUKE II. 41-52.
FIRST MORNING LESSON	ISAIAH LI.
FIRST EVENING LESSON	ISAIAH LII. 13, AND LIII. OR LIV
SECOND LESSONS	ORDINARY.

I. COMPLETE SERMONS.

Self-Appreciation.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. ROMANS xii. 3.

WHATEVER is important—and because it is important—and generally to the same extent that it is important—is also difficult. And for this reason it is exceedingly important, and exceedingly difficult, to every man, to take a right estimate of himself.

If the only thing we had to do was to humble ourselves, the difficulty would not be so great; at least it would be a difficulty of a different kind.

The cause of this difficulty is twofold. One, because, as an object may be too near the eye for vision to act upon it distinctly, so a man's mind is too near a man's mind, for a man's mind to see it clearly. And the other because in this court the judge, the witness, and the person examined are all one and the same. Hence the confusion; and out of the confusion an uncertainty about the result;

and because we find an uncertainty about the result, an unwillingness to undertake the work at all.

It is not, then, to be wondered at that there should be a tendency in man to run into great extremes; or, that the same man should, at different times in his life, be very inconsistent in himself in this matter of self-appreciation.

There can be no doubt that by far the most frequent, as it is the most dangerous, error is an over-estimate.

One man lives so much with himself, and in himself. Another is so fond of comparing himself with certain persons, whom he likes to select for that purpose. Another is so apt to compare himself with what he used to be at another time. One man is always seeing himself so entirely as a certain little loving circle, which lives about him, sees him. Another takes himself so weakly at the measure, not of what he is, but of what he is always hoping and intending to be. Another has altogether such low and unworthy standards of what a man may be, and what a man ought to be. Another is always so fixing his eyes on his good parts, and intentionally turning away from his bad one, till that class is exceedingly large, of which the apostle speaks, who 'think of themselves more highly than they ought to think.'

On the other hand, there are not a few who dangerously, and even sinfully, depreciate themselves.

Many, no doubt, do this simply in affectation. They think proudly, while they speak humbly about their own state. Those are mere hypocrites! I have nothing to do with them.

But besides these, it is quite plain that there are others who do really think of themselves loweringly, in a way and to a degree that, in the first place, is not true; secondly, it brings with it much depression and distress in their own feelings; thirdly, it often incapacitates them for work, and for the very work which God sets them to do; and fourthly, it thus darkens the grace of God in them, and His purposes are frustrated.

Now what I want you to observe is how the text steers us between these two rocks. 'For I say, through the grace given unto me'—and this very expression appears to me to be an illustration of the truth that we are going to consider, that S. Paul did not hesitate to assume to himself the power, and to take his apostolic position for exhortation and rebuke—'I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think:' there is the caution against the prevalent sin of human nature. And now notice, he goes on, 'but to think'—now observe he does not say lowly, he does not say humbly, as we probably should have expected him to say, or as we probably should

have written it, but he says, accurately, justly, in a proportion, 'think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.'

Now, I wish to look at this matter of the 'sober' judgment of our own selves, with as much accuracy as I can.

Before God we are, all of us, utterly bad. There is nothing in us, or by us, or that ever comes into contact with us, that is not defiled —utterly defiled in God's sight! Nothing comes up to His standard; and, therefore, nothing is good. For so He puts those two things together, 'All have sinned,' because all have 'come short of the glory of God.' 'If we were to wash ourselves with snow-water, and were to make ourselves never so clean, He would plunge us into the ditch, and our own clothes would abhor us.'

The memory of the past is one great humiliation; the sense of the present is all conscious weakness; the anticipation of the future is overwhelming, utterly overwhelming to every man who has been taught to see, and sees only himself.

The real history which every man who has been taught by the Spirit would write of his own heart is this: 'There never was a blacker thing than my heart. It is impossible that there can be any one upon earth who has a worse or, I think, so bad. I see sin everywhere. In every motive. In every word I have ever said, and in every silence I have ever kept. In everything I have done, and everything I have not done. In the best action of my life. In the purest prayer I have ever offered. In all my love, in all my faith, in all my peace, in everything. I am nothing. I have nothing. I can do nothing. If ever I am to have a righteousness, it must be in Christ. I have no other work, I have no other righteousness, I have no other grace but my Redeemer's.'

This, I am certain, is the verdict against himself which every Christian man who is in this world would bring in.

But, nevertheless, we should come to a false conclusion if we rested here.

In every one who is born of God there are now two natures. The old one is still just as it was—impotent for good, powerful for evil. It is there, even in the regenerate man. There it is, to abase all, to confound all, to drive all to Jesus Christ. And in this respect there is very little or no difference between any one of us or another. We are all alike. We are all desperate. So that no man can be fairly called better, where no man can be truly called good!

But, as to the new nature which has been imparted, it is quite different. There is now really a new nature, in which there are great distinctions. That new nature is now the man. Therefore S. John says, 'He that is born of God sinneth not,' *i.e.* the part that is 'born

of God;' and the man is characterised by that part that is in him; and the man is now become that part, and that part is now become the man, therefore the man 'that is born of God sinneth not.'

Of this new nature, with all the gifts and all the graces of which it is composed, I say there are various and numberless degrees. Either God has been pleased, by His sovereignty, to give to one man more than He has seen fit to give to another; or some have cultivated them more than others have cultivated them; and so it comes to pass, in point of fact, that there are real, actual, distinguishable distinctions of every grade between man and man. In the nature of the case it must be so; and, in point of fact, we all find it to be so.

Now, with these distinctions between man and man in the Church, God tells us that it is so far from being a proud thing, or a wrong thing, that one man should be conscious that he has more than another, that no man can take a true view of himself, or no man can be prepared, indeed, for his duties in life unless he takes it, because every man is to 'think soberly,' *i.e.* accurately of himself, 'according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.'

We have all, you know, different degrees of everything in life.

We have different degrees of bodily stature. We have different degrees of personal beauty. We know that we have these degrees; and we all know that it is just as God is pleased to make us.

We know that we have very different measures of this world's wealth; and generally we know that it is, and that we stand just in the scale of poverty or riches, as either God originally placed us, or as we may, by God's blessing, have placed ourselves.

We are perfectly satisfied, too, that the intellect and the attainments of one man are of an exceedingly different order from the intellect and the attainments of another man. It would be utterly silly and preposterous if a clever man, or a man well-informed, pretended to be ignorant of his own mental superiority to the attainments of another, who has not had the same natural or adventitious advantages. He must know it. He ought to know it. It is his duty to recognise it. It is absolutely essential, in order that he may take his right position in life, and fulfil his appointed tasks, that he should feel and acknowledge his mental superiority.

Now, if it be thus with the physical, with the worldly, with the intellectual possessions of a man, I reason why should it be less so with a man's spiritual possessions? Is not one man greater in his spiritual possessions than another? And are they not all equally the gifts of God?

And now here I must put in a caution. We must not lose sight of the fact that we are never told to gauge other men's states; or, to gauge ourselves exactly in comparison to other men's states; but to

gauge ourselves—ourselves, in relation to the place we are to take, and to the work that we are to do; for thus it runs, No man is 'to think of himself'—it does not say of another; no man is to 'think of himself more highly than he ought to think;' but 'every man is to think'—evidently 'of himself'—'soberly, according as God hath dealt to that man the measure of faith.'

Of course, it is impossible to do this altogether without reference to our fellow-creatures, for every man in this world is what he is comparatively to another; and the very terms that we use upon the subject must be comparative terms; but what I say is, that we must not do it for the sake of comparison with a fellow-creature; but if there be any comparison with a fellow-creature in it, it must be with reference to the higher relationships in which every man stands to his own peace of mind, and to his own work which God has given him to do.

I come, then, to this conclusion, that every man's view of himself is to be a correct, deliberate thing, according to the facts of the case, neither degrading himself too low, nor vaunting himself too high; but 'thinking of himself' as what he really is, and just as God has been pleased to make him. Let me take an example or two.

Your mind, perhaps, has been raising the question whether you are a child of God. Now, you must deal with the question deliberately. You must not think there is any virtue in saying, 'Oh! I am so very bad—I cannot be a child of God!' So far from this being right, it will be to depreciate and to wrong God in His greatest work. You should examine the matter with a calm, balanced judgment. Like this:—

'Now, what are the evidences on both sides? Have I proof that there is something in my heart which I did not put there? If not at all, and if at all, to what extent, have I affections, and desires, and principles, which are the office of the Holy Spirit to create?' When you find some proofs in favour of one view, and some proofs in favour of the other, that you are, or that you are not, a really converted person, then what you have to do is to act faithfully with evidence. Leave nothing out. You are not to diminish any one for the sake of another; but prayerfully, and with the Bible in your hand, to set the one over against the other; and make your decision honestly and sensibly, just as if the question were 'Am I rich?' or 'Do I know any science?' or 'Do I know any art?' or just as you would deal with any external matter of business.

Or the matter may stand thus. You want to know whether you are entitled to take a particular promise, that promise being made dependent upon certain conditions of character.

Now, here again, you must deal fairly with yourself in the investigation.

For instance, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' 'Am I "pure in heart"? Shall I "see God"? What does it mean? Does it mean a person absolutely without any evil thoughts or passions? Or does it mean one who is under the purifying influence of grace, who is purer than he was, who loves purity, who strives after purity, who is washed that he may be pure, who is pure in Christ? Then, how is it with me in this? Can I appropriate it? "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."'

Or, take another. 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.' 'What does it mean, "will do His will"? Does not it mean, is "willing to do His will"? Can my conscience bear me witness that I do desire God's will? How far do I desire God's will? Are there exceptions? Are those exceptions sufficient to neutralise the rule? Or, does the rule stand in my heart, despite the exceptions?'

Or, again, 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' 'On those terms may I hope acceptance of my prayer? "What is effectual?" Does it only mean earnest? Yes. Are my prayers earnest? What is the meaning of a "righteous man"? Does it mean a perfect and good man? Or does it mean a sinner justified in the righteousness of Christ? Am I justified? Then am I righteous? Then, may my prayer come under the condition, or may it not?'

With all these things, I say, what you have to do is act practically; just as you would with a matter of business; not afraid to look the thing really in the face; not afraid to see the good that is in you as well as the bad; and the bad that is in you as well as the good.

Or, once more, supposing you have a distinct opportunity now opening to you, and what you feel to be a call to do some work. You must not at once put it away and say, 'Oh no! I am not called to that work, I am not religious enough. I have not got religious strength enough.' But you must be deliberate about it. You must consider with yourself, 'Is this a providential opening? What degree of knowledge, and what degree of spiritual strength, will it take? Have I so much? If not, could I get it? Can I obtain it? Is it the kind of work to which my training has been adapting me? Do I think that God has been preparing me for this work, and this work for me?'

You must go through such processes as those in your mind; not in an off-hand way, not with a certain fancy of your own view of yourself, like Moses, when he was told to go to Pharaoh, but as you would go to some deep, sacred calculation, in which you feel that not only you, but eternal interests, and the glory of Almighty God, are all involved.

To help to guide you in this, and suchlike investigations, the Apostle gives one single rule, 'to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.' It is a remarkable expression of his. It is not saying, Judge of yourselves according to the knowledge, or the peace, or the good works, or the attainments, or the powers you have made. But, 'the measure of faith.' Does he say this because everything that is good in a man's heart is 'faith'? Or is it that every other good thing, being proportioned to the 'faith' we have, 'the measure of the faith' is indeed the measure of everything that a man has, or that a man can attain, and so becomes the measure of the man, *i.e.* is the man?

Whichever it be, just see the important part which 'faith' acts in all our relations. You are really before God what your 'faith' makes you. Realise the love of God to you, and, by that realisation, you have it.

Say the question is, 'Am I a child of God? May I take this promise? May I do this work?' It will be 'yes' or 'no,' and it will be 'yes' or 'no' in the degree 'according to the measure of your faith.'

If the answer be 'no,' accept the negative, humble yourself to the negative, and set about to make it an affirmative. But if the answer be, 'Yes, I am a child of God, I may appropriate the promise. I can do this work.' Is it elating? Will it exalt you? It is just as if God had given you a 'measure of faith.' It makes God's love great, but where are you? 'I have received something. I have had a gift.' Is that elating? Have you yet to learn that it is the most humbling thing in the whole world?

I wish you to go down with more deliberate and 'sober' judgments about your own state before God. I feel a sure confidence that God will not allow any man to deceive himself with a wrong view of himself, if his real prayer to God is, every day, 'Lord, let me not take either hollow peace or a false fear! Show me myself!'

Be always endeavouring to take your right height. There is an immense power in reality and straightforwardness. And reality and straightforwardness are these—'By the grace of God I am what I am.'

J. VAUGHAN.

Religious Education.

And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. S. LUKE ii. 46.

IT would be to miss the whole point of the story, if we talked of the boyhood of Christ as teaching the doctrine of His instructing others.

We have all seen pictures, and read narratives, of which the title is, 'The Child Jesus Teaching in the Temple.' And, no doubt, this inversion of the usual order of things, appears, at first sight, to fit well with the exceptional character of Christ, and to harmonise with His divine nature. It strikes us—at the threshold of His life—as almost the first evidence of His Deity that, in His earliest years, He should have so transcended the wisest of men, that He should instruct those of whom every one else was learning.

But such an interference as this would be with the right relationships of life is just what Christ never made.

On the contrary, as a son to His parents, as a subject to the authorities of the land, as a member of the Church to which He belonged, as a child to His heavenly Father, as a scholar to His teachers, Christ never departed from the proprieties of the established order of things.

His design was to raise, to consecrate, to exemplify all the relative duties of life.

Had He—'at twelve years old'—been the teacher of the aged and the learned, He could not have been a pattern for boys. And what would be unseemly in a boy, Christ, in His great model boyhood, never either was, or could be.

And with this view agree both the letter and the facts of the history. We read that He 'sat'—the attitude which was always held amongst the Jews significant of learning. The word which we have translated 'doctors' is expressly 'teachers.' He heard; and then the questions He asked grew out of the listening, as will be the case with all good and intelligent learning. For so it runs: 'Both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished,' not at His instructions, but 'at His understanding and answers.'

Therefore it is evident that at 'twelve years old' Christ was that which we all ought to be at that age, a simple, faithful learner; a pattern of a scholar.

It was the age at which a Jewish child received the name of 'a child of the precept,' or 'a child of the law,' and was brought under more particular instruction—preparatory to a rite which corresponded, in some measure, to our confirmation.

And therefore Christ was keeping the order—both of nature and of the Jewish religion—when, at that period of His life, He showed Himself a thoughtful and earnest inquirer after truth.

And if to any one this appears to detract from the Godhead of Christ, let him clearly understand this, that the characteristic and the marvel of Christ's sojourn on this earth was, that, while all the time He was perfect God, co-equal with the Father, yet, all the

privileges and all the immunities of Godhead were, during that period, placed in a voluntary abeyance: to use S. Paul's words, He had 'emptied Himself' of them, that He might be a Man,—a representative Man,—a Man in all the sympathies of manhood,—a Man that could be 'tempted' as a man 'in all points like as we are,' only 'without sin.'

It was in this perfect manhood that Christ 'grew.' Deity does not, and cannot grow. There can be no progress in Divinity. But Christ 'grew'—as in bodily, so in mental stature. And it is remarkable that it is mentioned just after the scene in the Temple, connected with that act of learning,—'And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.'

This view of Jesus—as the young scholar carrying on His education—laying in a store of thought and knowledge, which He would take down with Him to Nazareth, as food for thought —'sitting' modestly to receive it, through the appointed channels—has very important lessons.

I. The first thing which will occur to every one, is the fellowship which thus is established between Christ and every one who is learning. I hold it to be of the greatest importance that every one, at every age, should feel sure of the sympathy of Christ, in all the processes of the acquisition of knowledge.

I say to every young person who is being educated: You cannot believe too much, or too strongly, that Jesus feels with you in all your lessons, and all your studies. You may carry this thought out to any practical extent you like. If you are doing your duty religiously, you may command the sympathy of Christ in everything that concerns your school life. You cannot please Him better than by doing it, for He was a boy, and He knows, and never forgets, all that a boy feels, and that a boy wants. And in every age, as you reach it, it is pleasant to remember, 'Christ was once my age.'

Do you long, in your heart, to be a wise, good, learned, useful man? So did He.

Does the time sometimes seem long to you? It did to Him.

Have you to go through the discipline of reading, and learning by heart, and writing, and reflecting, and calculating, and studying? So had He.

Have you, during this time of your life, trials of being unkindly treated, and misunderstood, and talked to in an irritating way? So had He.

Do you encounter difficulties which it is hard to overcome? So did He.

Is your body, or your mind, sometimes over-taxed, and very weary? So was His.

Have you to be very patient in gaining knowledge and wisdom? So had He.

In all things you are in His steps. You have His pattern, and you will be certain of His love, and His help, and His oneness of heart with you, in a way in which no one besides ever did or ever could feel for you.

Do you say, 'May I then carry this out into little things? May I take my school lessons to Christ? May I, for instance, with an exercise, or a sum, or a problem, or any lesson, which I find hard, may I take it to Christ?' Undoubtedly. Not only you may, you ought. It will both honour Him and assist you. You cannot do it too often, or about anything too small.

When you are perplexed, and cast down in your work, then think of that Holy Boy 'sitting' and learning like you, in one of the rooms that went round the courts of the Temple, with His teachers around Him.

But then you must do as He did. You will observe it was His own act going to those teachers. His parents did not take Him. They did not know that He was there. It was quite voluntary. He had such a desire for learning. He so yearned for wisdom. And there He sat quietly, and humbly, and drinking it all in. And He asked many wise questions; and He made many wise answers. And when He went home, He carried on the same. He is quite obedient to His father and His mother. And He learned there all they taught Him. Probably He learned something useful of manual labour; most likely carpentry. And there is very little doubt He learned a great deal by heart. And He thought deeply. He did everything as one who wishes to improve himself. And He had a high aim to live to some great purpose. And He put God into everything. He called learning 'doing His Father's business.'

And so He 'grew' in everything 'lovely, and of good report.'

And, oh! what a Man He became! How great! how holy! how useful! what a life He lived! what a death He died!

But He laid the foundation of it all in His childhood.

And here we have a glimpse of what that childhood was. 'Sitting in the Temple, in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.'

Let me say a word both to those who teach, and to those who are taught, about 'asking questions.'

All good teaching is 'answering questions.' If the pupil ask the question with his lips, it is best. If not, you must imagine his question. You teach to very little purpose indeed, if you are not meeting a thought, an inquiry in the child's mind. That is, you must suppose a question. If you have never tried this, you would be surprised at the difference it makes in teaching.

And I say to every child, If you wish to learn, 'ask questions.' Never be ashamed. No question that you can ask will be anything but an honour to you. And if you do not now, you will never do it. And you will remain ignorant all your life about many things, simply because you did not 'ask questions' when you were young. We have the highest authority. Christ asked questions.

But the subject expands itself to a larger and a holier character.

II. To my mind, there is nothing which so raises and consecrates the laws of education as that incident which took place when 'the Child Jesus' was in the Temple.

There we see Him 'sitting,' a pure learner, a teacher of humility. What a Christianising was there of all education! What a dignity to the office of a teacher! What a sacredness and encouragement to the work of learning! How near it brings it all to Christ, and how it is all hallowed by touching Him!

Blessed 'doctors' were they who taught the young Christ!

And what are you doing, Christian teacher? You are teaching the baptized. You are teaching those in whom (as we believe) Christ is. What a work! Oh what shall that teaching be? How true! how holy! how loving! how hopeful! how happy!

And children—children in your school days, in your studies—look at your real position. You are where Jesus was, doing exactly what He did, learning.

What an honour! what a comfort! what a responsibility!

God forbid that we should ever separate these two things, which are thus solemnly blended—education and Christ! Could there be a stranger alienation? Could there be an unholier divorce? For did not they meet in the very Person of 'the Holy Child'?

Consider what you do if you take religion out of education. You remove the largest and the best element of intellectual advancement, for nothing improves and cultivates religion in a child like religious thought.

You build; but you have laid no foundation. You crowd your ship with sail, but you have poured in no ballast. You puff up, but there is no principle of humility to balance it. You give knowledge; but no wisdom to guide it; no bond; no controlling power. You have the sowing, but there is no reaping power. You train a part of the man. You strengthen the head, which is the servant; but you let alone the heart, which is its master. You assimilate to the serpent, but not to the dove; to Satan, but not to God.

And leaving God out, where can the blessing be? Where are the mightier teachings of the Holy Ghost? Where is the inner education of the child's own soul? Where is his eternity? Where

is the greatness of his undying being? But bind them together, and closer and closer your teaching will be, if you would educate, which is the great thing, and not instruct, which is the little thing.

Let the teacher always see Christ in the child, and the child always find Christ in the teacher; and all in holy places, in the porch of truth,—in the outer courts of nature, and the inner courts of grace, all in the one great temple of God's redeemed world.

J. VAUGHAN.

II. OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

'A Living Sacrifice.'

'A living sacrifice.' ROMANS xii. 1.

IF salvation is as much by the life of Christ as it is by His death, then the 'life' of Christ may be strictly called a part of His 'sacrifice.' For, since that 'life' is a life for others, it is a 'sacrificed life.' He not only sacrificed His life upon the Cross, but, when He resumed that life, He consecrated it to the Church; for He lives now for the Church's sake. So that all along,—not on Calvary alone, but in heaven,—in His presence there and in His presence here, and for ever and ever, Christ is, what He tells us to be, an unselfish, dedicated Being—a 'Living Sacrifice.'

The old sacrifices of the Jews,—the sacrifices of beasts, and lambs, and pigeons—were the sacrifices of life,—that the life, which was destroyed in one thing, might, by an act of faith, be life, spiritual life, communicated to another. The life which was 'sacrificed' never lived again. It could, in no sense, be called 'a living sacrifice,' excepting in so far that it imparted life to the offerer. But in Christ the dead 'sacrifice' lives: the re-living is a part of the sacrifice. It would not have been an effectual 'sacrifice' without.

And so it is with us. There are two parts of the 'sacrifice' which we have to make of ourselves to God. Something dies. The old dies. The old affections, the old tastes, the old habits, the old nature dies. But it dies all to live again in a new form. The old character is not destroyed. There is a resurrection of the 'sacrificed' nature. And what was killed, and was buried, comes out—like Christ from His tomb—the same, but renovated. A fresh condition of old things. The 'sacrifice' lives, and that which 'lives' is dedicated. The 'life' is 'sacrificed.' And so the Christian is—what Christ is—a 'living sacrifice.'

The two thoughts which I wish to press on your attention are

these; that all 'life' is a 'sacrifice,' and that the 'sacrifice' must be 'living.'

I. We often speak of 'making sacrifices for Christ.' That expression is not in the Bible. On the contrary, it rather prejudices the true view of the subject; for it seems to limit 'sacrifice' to particular acts, whereas the whole life is the sacrifice. Therefore it is never right to speak of any particular act as exceptional, and to feel, 'Now I make a sacrifice,' as if the rest were not a sacrifice. And probably we make the greatest mistakes in this, and we count those things as the greatest sacrifices, which really are the least.

Now see how the matter really stands. All I am, and all I have, are dead,—dead, as God calls dead—without His life, separate from Him—dead! And if, in my natural state, I could offer to God my whole being, I should be offering a dead thing—a dead 'sacrifice!' And God will never accept a dead thing.

Then came the real 'Sacrifice'—Christ. That 'Sacrifice' first died, and then lived. The Dying 'Sacrifice' was *for me*—that I might not offer death. The 'Living Sacrifice' is *in me*—that I may offer 'life.' I first live through the Dying 'Sacrifice,' and then I live in the 'Living Sacrifice.'

Therefore what I offer, if I am a believer, is not death. I have nothing to do with that. Christ offered death. I am a 'living sacrifice.' I am not to die. As a living member of Christ, I shall never die. I could not offer death. Mine is, essentially, 'a living sacrifice.'

We arrive, then, at the position of the man who has to offer to God not a dead but a 'living sacrifice.'

First, he himself, by virtue of his union with Christ, 'lives,' and therefore he can offer living things.

Were he not alive, and 'a new creature in Christ,' he might give to God all his substance, all his talent, all his thought, all his affections; but all the while it would be a dead sacrifice. A dead heart cannot offer a living sacrifice.

II. But now, being 'alive,' he offers living things livingly.

Everything which the believer offers is 'living.' The death is taken out of it. It is not like the victim that died; the antitype to that was the death of Christ. That is all finished and fulfilled. And what is left is life—only 'life;' and yet it is 'sacrifice;' and this is what it means—a 'living sacrifice.'

But you say, 'Would that it were so in me! For I feel that all I give to God is dead. My own soul is dead.' Yes; but do not you know that it is the act of 'sacrifice' which makes it 'live'? The fact of 'sacrifice' is 'the life.' For you lay it upon an altar. What is the altar? Christ. The moment anything touches that Altar,

and is really laid upon it—all thoughts, words, actions, prayers—your whole being gathers virtue. It 'lives' because it touches the Altar!

The two words cannot really be divided: if things 'live,' they must be 'sacrificed;' and if they are 'sacrificed,' they must 'live.' So that I am only uniting what can never be separated, when I say 'living sacrifice.'

It makes all the difference in the power and happiness of life, whether all we do is dull, heavy, dead work, done in fear; or done in duty; or done mercenarily, for reward; or whether it is all bright and sparkling with light and love.

I could conceive an ancient Israelite offering his 'sacrifice.' It must have been a very solemn act, and perhaps a quiet one; but it could scarcely be joyous; at least the joy must have been in something outside the act of death which he was doing.

A sincere man, who is trying to do what is right that he may please God, but is not in Christ, is very much in the same position. There is a sort of satisfaction. But it is poor work, with little animation and no ecstasy! It is all death.

But it is quite another thing when it is all,—not that I may live, but because I live; not in terror of death, but in consequence of 'life.' Every offering I ever make—a thank-offering—only a 'thank-offering'—there is the life of a living soul in it; the death is all past and done; the pain all over; and, alike the offering and offerer has a distinct sense of pardon, and safety, and Christ, and love, and heaven, and God, and eternity. That is 'a living sacrifice;' the 'living sacrifice' of a living man to a living God.

It may be said, 'But such a life ceases to be a "sacrifice." There is no pain in it. There is no self-denial.' And what if there is not? Do you think that there will be self-denial in heaven? Or can we, for a moment, suppose that it is the sorrow and suffering that is in it which makes anything good and pleasing to God? or that it is less acceptable, when it is all pleasure—all pleasure because it is all love?

It might have been so the other side Calvary; but it can never be so under the Gospel, as soon as the self has died, which makes the 'sacrifice' painful, and the will, which resisted, is perfectly conformed to the will of God,—so removing all conflict, and making the 'sacrifice' a delight,—and the Christ, and the affection, and the certainty of heaven in it, make all that once was a 'burnt-offering' to be now only a 'wave-offering' of exceeding gladness.

Do you imagine that a good, kind God does not find Himself more glorified in all happy 'sacrifices' than ever He was in an unhappy 'sacrifice'?

It is a superstitious feeling, which we take with us from our

darker days, to suppose that pain is of the nature of 'sacrifice,' or that pain makes a better 'sacrifice.'

When God made you His child, it was that you might glorify Him by a very happy life.

God calls you to no distress or suffering, but to a high privilege and an exceeding gladness, when He says, 'I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.'

Your 'life,' your eternal life is now a fact,—a finished fact. 'Sacrifice' it. Your joy—to the God of your joys; your love—to the God of your love; your life—to the God of your life.

I can conceive no higher service, and no greater heaven, here or for ever, than the constant offering of 'the living sacrifice' of a grateful heart, which we know is acceptable to a God of love.

J. VAUGHAN.

A Living Sacrifice.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ROMANS xii. 1.

I WONDER how many of us are regular church-goers enough, or attentive enough to the details of the Church Service, to notice that the chapter of the Epistle to the Romans which begins with the text is treated differently in our Services from any other. On these Sundays after Epiphany it is read straight through in the Sunday Epistles, while of no other chapter do we read more than a few selected verses. I cannot tell you the history of this usage—when it began, or exactly why; but we can hardly doubt that it was from a sense that it was the most generally instructive, at least the most practical part, of the Apostolic writings. It is similarly treated with exceptional honour in another part of our Services, of which we do know the history—the choice of passages to be read as Lessons at Morning and Evening Prayer. This is not nearly as ancient as that of the Epistles and Gospels at the Communion—it is peculiar to England, and not much more than three hundred years old; indeed, it has been a good deal altered (though not in the point I speak of) within our own memory, while the general plan of the Epistles and Gospels was brought over by S. Augustine when he founded the English Church, nearly thirteen hundred years ago, and is mostly, though not exactly, taken from that of his master, S. Gregory the Great. But you may remember, or you will see if you look at the

calendar in your Prayer-books—that in leap year, when there is another day to provide with Lessons, besides those on which we read the New Testament and most of the Old Testament through, the New Testament chapters that are thought best worth an *extra* reading are part of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, and this twelfth chapter of Romans. So the words of the text, which S. Paul puts at the very head and front of this most important chapter, may be taken by us as being presented for our special attention, above even other sayings of the inspired Apostle, by the judgment of the Church, in which dwells the same Spirit that was in Him. And it may help us somewhat in learning the practical lesson of this text if we listen to a story of a servant of Christ, a follower of S. Paul, who fulfilled this precept in the most literal manner. The story is one that connects itself closely with this Epiphany season.

I. In the Book of the Acts of the Apostles we hear of the first persecution of the Christians, and the deaths of the first martyrs—SS. Stephen, James the brother of John, and others; but it was a little later than the time when that book was written that persecution began in a more terrible form. The worst times for the Church did not begin till the Roman government itself began to persecute. Then it was that SS. Peter and Paul, and a great multitude of others, were put to death at Rome itself; then Babylon began to be, as S. John describes it in the Revelation, drunken with the blood of the saints and the prophets and martyrs of Jesus; and so things went on, with some intermissions, for about two hundred and fifty years.

It was towards the end of this time that Lucian lived, a priest of the Church of Antioch. For much of his lifetime, the Church, which had been terribly persecuted fifty years before, was enjoying one of those seasons of comparative peace: churches were built for the living Church to worship in, and people could freely read God's Word and study other books that aided them in the study of that. Lucian was one of the most learned men among the Christians of his time; and he seems to have spent most of his life in the study of the Bible itself.

Now we might think that a learned man, labouring diligently at the study of the Bible, could not fail to learn the exact truth that is taught there about the things of God and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We might be surprised to hear that Lucian fell into great error—that he taught that the Lord Jesus Christ, though begotten of the Father before all worlds, was not of one substance with Him, not co-eternal. We do not know very exactly what his error was, but it must have been serious, for in spite of all the useful work he had done for the Church, he was for a long time

cut off from the communion of the faithful. But he was not a heretic such as S. Paul speaks of, who continues one after a first and second admonition, and must be rejected: he knew, I suppose, that he might fall into error, in even devout speculation, but that God would not allow His whole Church to go wrong; so Lucian gave in, and was reconciled to the Church.

II. And then began the last, and perhaps the most terrible, of the persecutions of the Church by the Roman emperors. In no part of the world was the persecution more cruel than in Syria and Palestine, the earliest home of the gospel; and Lucian, as one of the best-known of the Christian clergy, was not likely to escape. He was taken and thrown into prison. Now the martyrs were often tried with strange and horrible tortures, with machines ingeniously made on purpose to give pain; but with Lucian they tried a simpler way, not less cruel, to make him deny the Christian faith. Most heathen sacrifices were what, among the Jews, would have been called peace-offerings, where only some of the fat and inner parts of the animal sacrificed were burnt on the altar, and the rest was eaten by the worshippers. Thus it is that we hear a good deal in S. Paul's Epistles about eating things offered to idols. He says that to sit at meat in the idol's temple is really to have fellowship with devils, but that if the meat was carried away from the temple and sold in the market, or served up at a dinner-party, a Christian need not be afraid if he happened to eat of it. Now, it was made a test whether the Christians would agree to have fellowship with idol-worship, to require that they should either burn incense on the idol's altar, or eat of the idol's sacrifice; and to Lucian in the prison they gave nothing to eat but things offered to idols, so that, if he refused these, he might starve to death.

And starve to death he did, when there was always plenty to eat in sight and in reach. If he had been mistaken in what he thought about the Lord Jesus before, there was no mistake now, when there was a question of renouncing His love and being false to His service. I do not know how long it went on; generally, it takes from three days to a week for a man to die if kept without any food or drink; but sometimes people have lasted much longer. We do know that it was mid-winter. By the Feast of the Epiphany he grew so weak that he could not rise from the ground, and the guards set in the prison by the heathen saw that their work would soon be over, and thought they need take no more care to prevent his having anything to eat but the sacrifices. Even before, it seems they did not prevent Christian friends from coming to see him, though they took care that they should bring him no food; now a party of them, not only came to visit the martyr in prison, but they managed to bring in

secretly a little bread and wine. It was too late, and the quantity they could hide was too small, to save the saint's bodily life; but it was enough to feed his soul and theirs, to let them keep the Feast of the Lord's Manifestation with His servant who was so soon to see His face. They put the bread and the cup of wine on S. Lucian's breast as he lay on the floor; they stood close round him as a church-wall built of living stones round the living altar, so that the guards at the door, and other heathens, could not see nor hear what was going on. Then the dying priest broke the Bread and blessed the Cup, and the faithful stooped down in turn to eat and drink with him; and when it was done they went away. He lingered till the next morning, and then fell asleep; like Elijah, he went in the strength of that meat into the Mount of God.

Now this story of S. Lucian shows what the spirit of the Sacrament is—it is a spirit of self-sacrifice. The Sacrament was ordained for the continual remembrance of the self-sacrifice of the Lord Jesus; those only profit by it who, as the service itself says, 'offer and present unto God themselves, their souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto Him.' Keep back nothing when you come to give your alms; think, like David, that you will not offer to the Lord your God what costs you nothing, but give enough to make you feel the worldly loss, and then your spirit will gain. And keep back no thought; let there be no wish, no habit of yours that you are not ready to give up, if you find it is God's will that you should. Those who do this will find that they are indeed partakers in the sacrifice of Christ; they may hope to receive remission of their sins, and all other benefits of His Passion.

G. H. SIMCOX.

A Living Sacrifice.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ROMANS xii. 1.

I. PERHAPS we all think that we know what is the nature of sacrifice; but its real original nature is, I believe, very seldom known or understood, even by good Christian people, who know, and get great edification from what they know, of the nature of some sacrifices, but not of all. We often hear it said, that it proves that all nations must have felt that they were sinners, because all nations have offered sacrifices to their gods. Here it is taken for granted that all sacrifices were what the Jews called sin-offerings —where blood was shed, and the life and body of a beast, or some-

times of a man or a child, was offered to God in atonement for a sin that the worshipper had committed. Now in reality this is one of the least common sorts of sacrifice. The Jews offered such sacrifices to the Lord their God, and their neighbours and kinsmen, the Assyrians and the Canaanites, did so too to their gods; so did the ancient people of Mexico, who are a strange example of the combination of savage cruelty with a very strong sense of sin and of the necessity of spiritual repentance. But I know no other nation but these three or four with whom sin-offerings were common or important; some nations who offered them seem only to have learnt it from one or other of these.

The forms of sacrifice which really are common to very nearly all nations of the world, and all sorts of religions, are what are called in the Bible peace-offerings, meat-offerings (or better meal-offerings, as it is in the Revised Version), and drink-offerings. When people were going to have a feast, they said, as a heathen poet puts it, 'Let us call the gods, and the Father of Heaven himself, to a share of our prey.' The heathen actually thought what God warned the Israelites not to think, that the gods would eat bulls' flesh and drink the blood of goats; or at least that, if fat was burnt on their altar, they would smell a sweet savour, and be refreshed and pleased with that as men are with meat and drink. So, whenever devout heathens killed an animal for food, they began, and sometimes ended, both the slaughter, the cookery, and the meal with giving some part of the animal to the gods, usually by burning it on the altar. When they drank wine or strong drink they poured out a little at first for the gods to drink; and sometimes they gave them the first-fruits of bread in the same way.

But then sometimes religious people would say, 'Does not *everything* belong to God? Is it not selfish and irreverent for us to give Him only a little of the fat of a beast, or some of the inward parts, or the tongue, and eat all the rest, and nearly all the good pieces, ourselves?' And so we come to the *burnt-offering*, where the whole of the animal sacrificed was burnt, and none eaten by the worshippers; this was done in many nations when people wished very strongly indeed to please their God.

And one reason, no doubt, why people might feel very strongly the need of pleasing Him was when they knew that He was displeased with them already. Then they would, if they had a really strong sense of sin, offer what may be called a sin-offering. This would not be eaten by the worshipper; instead of feasting, as he did at common sacrifices, he would now mourn and fast for his sins; but it would either be burnt to please the god or would be eaten by his priests.

So we have three chief sorts of sacrifice that men learn to offer

from their natural religious feelings—the peace-offering, or sacrifice of feasting; the burnt-offering or sacrifice of giving all to God; and the sin-offering, or sacrifice for the turning away God's anger from the sinner.

II. Now these sorts of sacrifice were all ordered in the Law of Moses, and some if not all of them were offered by the Patriarchs before. It is not wonderful that they should have been, as they were, common to God's people and the heathen, because they belong to the best side of heathenism—not to the worship of idols, or the imagination of many gods, but to what is called natural religion, the feeling of the human heart after God, if haply it might find Him. It was a very childish sort of notion that God would smell a sweet savour from burning fat or flesh, or that the blood of calves and of goats could take away sin; but while the world, and even God's own people, were in their childhood, He bore with their childish notions, which really expressed, in the best way that they could yet express them, the essential parts of worship.

For the three sorts of sacrifice that we spoke of all represent, in different ways, the one great and all-important Sacrifice which we all know of—the Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. I need not explain how the sin-offering is a figure of His atoning death, because that is very fully explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews; all Christians know about that sacrifice, and it is, probably, because people do understand the meaning of that one sacrifice, that they forget that there were other kinds of sacrifice too.

And yet, profitable as it is to understand the nature of our Lord's sin-offering, it is not without loss if we forget that there were other sacrifices too; for all kinds of sacrifice, and not that one alone, are fulfilled and made perfect in Him. He fulfilled what is meant by the burnt-offering both in His life and in His death: He gave Himself up to God entirely. He kept nothing back, not His Body, not His Soul, not any part or power of either, not the parting of body and soul in death; but in all things, at all times, in every way, He gave Himself to God. Though this is not dwelt on in detail in the Epistle to the Hebrews as much as the likeness to the sin-offering, it is taught as plainly where the Apostle quotes the Psalm as saying, 'Sacrifices and offerings and burnt-offerings and sin-offerings Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein;' and then, 'Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first,' the Apostle says, 'that He may establish the second;' *all* the old kinds of sacrifice pass away, because they *all* are fulfilled in Jesus Christ coming to do the will of God.

'By the which will we are sanctified,' the Apostle goes on, 'through the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all.' The Lord

Jesus is the true burnt-offering, entirely given to God to please Him; He is the true sin-offering, entirely given to God because He has been displeased; but we have not yet heard how He is the true peace-offering, which also is given to God, but which serves to give a joyful feast to men also. But is not that exactly what is done in the Holy Communion? In that Sacrament the Lord gives His sacrificed Flesh to be eaten by the worshippers. I believe that this same Apostle means to teach us this, that the sacrifice of Christ is a sin-offering and a peace-offering in one, when he says, 'We have an altar, whereof those have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle;' that whereas according to the law of Moses it was unlawful even for the priests to eat the most solemn sin-offerings, those offered for the sins of all the people, according to the gospel we do eat the very Body of Christ which was given for many for the remission of sins. People who clave to the Jewish law, who 'served the tabernacle,' had no right to eat of the altar where that sacrifice was offered (whether he meant the Cross, or the Lord's Table in the Church, is a matter of no moment); but we who 'go out to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach,' have the right.

G. H. SIMCOX.

A Living Sacrifice.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ROMANS xii. 1.

AT last we come to apply directly to ourselves these words of the Apostle. We have spoken of the one great perfect Sacrifice, the self-sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. We saw how that realised and fulfilled all the meanings of all sacrifices ever offered by men, according either to the light of nature or the law of Moses; how it was not only an atoning offering for sin like the burnt-offering, but an act of supreme and entire self-devotion; and also how, as in the peace-offering, the worshippers are allowed to feast upon the sacrifice.

But now we are to go on, and see how we are to offer sacrifice to God after Christ's pattern; how He not only summed up and fulfilled all that men sought to do by their sacrifices before He came, but also has left us an example, showing how sacrifices 'holy, acceptable unto God,' are to be offered now. It is true, and very important to know, that apart from His Sacrifice no sacrifices of ours could be acceptable; it is only through His merits that we have the right to come near to God, only through the grace He has obtained for us

that we are able to do anything pleasing to God; but now that He has made peace between us sinners and His Father, now that He has sent us His Holy Spirit, we can come near to God, we can please Him by the service we do Him; and we are bound to do the very most that we can.

I. S. Paul in the text tells us that we are to do that which, if not the greatest and most necessary, was the most constant, the most all-pervading of the sacrificial acts of the Lord Jesus. When He laid down His life for us, when He died as a sacrifice for our sins, He did it once, only once, and once for all; but there never was a moment during His life on earth when He was not presenting His Body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. All through His earthly life He presented Himself a living sacrifice to God; yea, and we may surely say He does so now, in His present heavenly life. There He is before God, still seeking His glory that sent Him, still fulfilling the Father's will now in the glory that He enjoys, as He once fulfilled that will by renouncing it. Once and once only He died as a sacrifice to God; but ever before, and ever since, He has presented Himself as a living sacrifice.

That then is our great duty to God—to offer ourselves to Him in entire obedience, entire devotion, entire self-surrender, as the Lord Jesus did. To keep back nothing, to refuse nothing that God may demand of us, but to give ourselves to Him entirely and unreservedly—that is the first and great act of Christian worship, that is the chief sacrifice required of every Christian. That ought to pervade the whole of our lives, as it pervaded the life of Jesus: we ought in every act of life, at every moment of life, to be giving ourselves up to God, yielding ourselves to His will, devoting ourselves to His service. If we do that, we are following the Lord's example; if we do that, we are fulfilling the Apostle's bidding in the text.

II. Only, then, how are we to know whether we are doing this? what is the test whether we are doing it or not? There are many people who never give up anything, never miss a pleasure or an indulgence that they can get, at any rate without plain sin, plain wrong to a neighbour. It would seem absurd to say that such people sacrifice themselves, and yet they will tell you that they devote themselves to God, which means just the same thing. They will say that they take all the pleasures that come in their way, because it is God's will that they should: that if it were God's will to send them sorrow instead of pleasure—that is, if there came any sorrow which they could not help suffering, then they would submit to that will of God, as they do now to His will that gives them their pleasures and comforts. And, as there certainly are people who serve God very truly who are not only happy in their own hearts, but prosperous in

the world, it is not easy to prove whether any one is really self-indulgent, or only is enjoying God's earthly blessings humbly and thankfully. Not only is it quite impossible for us to judge rightly of our neighbours in this matter, which it is not our business to do; but it is hard to judge ourselves, which is our business. Self-indulgent people very often think that they inwardly present themselves, their souls and bodies, as a living sacrifice to God, though it does not hurt them as a dying sacrifice would; and, on the other hand, sometimes devout and humble Christians are afraid of their own happiness, and think that if earthly things are as pleasant as they find them they must be letting heavenly things slip. So we want something that shall serve as a test of the reality and sincerity of people's self-sacrifice, so as neither to make the heart of the righteous sad which the Lord hath not made sad, nor to strengthen the hands of the wicked that he should not turn from his wicked way, by promising him life.

Now there are two things that Christians are called on to do, which in the New Testament are constantly spoken of under the figure of sacrifices. These are, if we put each in one word, worship and almsgiving. Christian worship is, and is meant by God to be, of the nature of self-sacrifice—there must be something disagreeable to human nature in it if it be true worship after the pattern of our High Priest, if it is to be made by Him acceptable to His God and Father.

How are we to make our worship an act of self-sacrifice? Our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving seems to be a sacrifice such as David would not offer—such as the Son of David most certainly did not offer—a sacrifice that costs us nothing: what are we to do to remedy this?

One thing I would say is this, to take care that we are not selfish in our devotions, that we do not interfere with other people's going to church to secure the pleasure of going for ourselves. If any one misses their regular church-going, feels the want of it, and is unhappy and put out at staying away, then if they sometimes stay away to let some one else go, when both cannot go at once, they are presenting their bodies a living sacrifice not less but more truly than if they were present in the church or before the altar.

But one thing we all can do: we can do good and communicate to our neighbours on a really generous and magnificent scale; we can give something that we miss, something that makes us go without some pleasure. Always and in all churches, from the Apostles' time onward, the giving of alms for the poor and for the service of the Church has formed a part of the Communion Service; Christian people have offered, not only the meal-offering and drink-offering of the bread and wine, which are cheap things, always easy to provide,

but have given as they could of their worldly goods, that their offering might be a real act of self-sacrifice.

G. H. SIMCOX.

The Sacrifice of Believers.

ROMANS xii. 1.

I. OUR sacrifice.—Without sacrifice there can be no true worship. This is a truth which even the heathen recognise, for every heathen religion has its sacrifices or acts of self-denial. From the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, our sacrifices have gone on—at first offered by the head of the family as priest—then, when Israel was delivered from Egypt, by the priests of the tribe of Levi—then came the 'full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world,' and after that, no more taking of life in sacrifice, but instead of that the offering of 'ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice.' This is the sacrifice here urged by S. Paul—not only our souls, but our bodies also, must be given up to the service of God. This is in clear contradiction to those false teachers who asserted that the body was nothing, and might be either indulged to excess or mortified to the verge of destruction. Again, sacrifices of old were slain, and were not accounted sacrifices until they were dead, but we must present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, cut off from the world, and given up wholly to His service. This is, indeed, our 'reasonable service,' the only service which can commend itself to reason in its highest form. It is but a lower form of reason that sets itself up against God. The greater and more perfect the contact with God, the higher the reason.

II. Our transformation.—These two words 'conformed' and 'transformed' are very striking. In the original the former implies a state of change, being changed with every change of this world, while the latter implies the settling down into a permanent form. The metaphor is taken from travellers who move from place to place with their tents, and at last arrive at their destination, and dwell in strong and permanent houses. The world is always changing its manners and opinions, and it is impossible for the Christian to be always changing thus. Even in the midst of this changing world we may be transformed to the heavenly likeness. We may well use the first Collect at the end of the Holy Communion service for this (1 S. John ii. 15, 17).

III. Our membership.—The membership of the great Body of

which Christ is the Head is truly a mighty thought. S. Paul is very fond of this expression, and often uses it. Here he wishes to impress upon us that every member has his proper place, and none should try to exalt himself, but be content with the place assigned him by Christ. It is very difficult for us to form a real and sober estimate of ourselves. We are very apt to commit the fault here condemned by S. Paul, and think too highly of ourselves; and sometimes the opposite fault is committed, and we persist in thinking ourselves worse than we really are. God alone can guide us into the truth. And with the thought of our membership of Christ comes another thought, that of our membership of each other. No scheme for the brotherhood of mankind ever approached this in sublimity. In Christ we are all members of the same family, children of the same Father, bound by ties which are eternal. If this, Christ's own plan, were recognised, earth would become a foretaste of Heaven, for all men would be in complete peace and harmony.

From the Family Churchman.

Consecrated and Transformed.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God. ROMANS xii. 1-2

THIS is the entreaty of a man who was living this life of blessedness. It is the entreaty of a man who had lingered at the Cross until its great love possessed him.

I.—Look at the consecration to which we are urged. There are two leading ideas.

(1) Sacrifice—nothing in God's world is any good until it is given up to that which is above it.

(2) Transformation—everything by sacrifice not lost, but turned into higher life.

II.—The result of this consecration.

(1) 'Be not conformed to this world.' This is the only way upward—first right with God, and then right with all things: the world is put in its right place.

(2) The renewed mind has new faculties of discernment. 'That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' We cannot know God's will until we are given up to it. Your part is the surrender of yourself to God: if you do your part, be quite sure that he will do His. The tran formation begun will go on until we be made in all things like unto our blessed Lord.

M. G. PEARSE.

OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

Conformity and Transformation.

Be not conformed to this world. ROMANS xii. 2.

WE are celebrating at this season the Epiphany or Manifestation of Christ, typified by the visit of the wise men from the East to the lowly cradle of the infant Saviour; realised in fact by that proclamation of His name to all nations, which began in the conversion of the first Gentile, Cornelius, and is still (though too faintly and intermittently prosecuted) the work and office of the age in which we live; hereafter to be perfected and consummated in that glorious season to which faith looks forward, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

At this season it is appropriate that we should be reminded, as we are in the chosen services of our Church, what Christ Himself was in His earthly life, and what we must be who would hereafter see Him as He is. The Gospel for each Sunday, speaking generally, gives us the one, in some special phase of its manifestation; the Epistle gives us the other. Listen to its teaching.

Be not conformed to this world. How familiar the words! The world, conformity to the world, are phrases often on the lips of religious teachers: and well they may be. But let us be quite sure that we first understand them.

I. There are two terms in the original language for this expression, *the world.* One of them regards the things that now are in reference to time, the other in reference to space. The one means the things that are seen, this material world, with all its enjoyments and gratifications, its riches, pleasures, and honours; the other means the time or age to which these things belong, and by which they are limited and circumscribed; the period, longer or shorter—we know not its duration, but God knoweth—previous to what we are taught to designate as the end of all things; that consummation of the old, that introduction of the new, which shall be the concomitant of the second Advent of Jesus Christ, the consequence of that second and greater Epiphany for which the Church on earth and in heaven is ever waiting and watching.

The two terms are often employed separately, and once at least in the Scriptures they are combined. The phrase, according to the course of this world, is an example of that combination. Ye walked in sin, according to, following the rule and direction of, the age, or period, of this present world.

Now therefore, Be not conformed to this world, becomes equivalent to, Be not conformed to time, but rather to eternity. Wear not the fashion of persons who belong to time, and have nothing to do with

eternity. Let not the garb of your souls, let not the habit of your lives, be that which befits persons whose home, whose dwelling-place, whose all, is in the passing unreal scene which we call human life, and who have no part nor lot in the permanent unchanging realities of the new heaven and new earth, which shall come into view with the return of Christ and the resurrection of the just. Wear not the garb of time, but invest yourselves already with the fashion of eternity.

II. How large, how elevating, how magnificent a view is here opened! How different from those poor narrow rules which would prescribe to a Christian exactly what he shall allow himself of human pleasure, and from what particular kinds of recreation he shall of necessity turn aside! The world here does not designate particular circles of society, or particular modes of occupation or of amusement. The text says to each of us, Brother, sister, made of God for Himself, redeemed of Christ for glory, object of divine love, temple of the Holy Spirit, live not for time, live for eternity. Let it not appear from your manner of life, let it not be inferred from your tone of conversation, let it not be gathered from your evident frivolity, your prevailing vanity, or self-indulgence, or eagerness after the pleasures or advantages of this world, that you are one of those for whom this life is all, and who are not looking for any blessed hope beyond the grave to which you are hastening. Do not so great an injustice to yourself, do not so great an injury to others, as to leave it in any doubt where your real home is, your heart, your treasure. When two things come into competition, the opinion of men and the will of God, let it be well seen which you prefer. If any particular occupation or any particular amusement, if any particular friendship or any particular affection, be found by you, on trial, to be unfavourable to your growth in grace, to have a direct tendency to make you forget your soul, forget heaven, forget your Saviour, forget your God, suspect that thing, forego it if you can, not as a painful sacrifice, but with a cheerful and a willing heart, as one who loves something else far above all. When any question arises of right and wrong, of reverence or of irreverence, of charity or harshness, of faith or unbelief, let none doubt for one instant on which side you are. When others look to you for the sanction, by word or by silence, of an ungodly principle, of a worldly maxim, of an uncharitable judgment, show them, instantly and boldly, that you withhold it out of love to God.

III. No one can be conformed to, can fashion himself according to, that which he knows not. We are conformed to this world, not because it satisfies us, not because it makes us happy, not because we find rest or peace in living by its rules and principles, but because it is the only world that we know, the

only world (let me say) in which we know any one. The early Christians were conformed to the other world because One whom they knew well, and whom they loved above all, lived there; because they had a Friend, trusted in and ever communed with, in that other world; and because, where He was, there their hearts were. The way to escape from our worldliness is not so much to struggle with it hand to hand, but to supersede it, as it were, by the entrance into us of a new affection; by giving our hearts to another, even to Him who has already entered for us within the veil, and who now and ever liveth to be our intercessor and our life. In proportion as we enter more deeply into the knowledge of ourselves by careful self-examination, we shall more deeply feel our need of a Saviour out of ourselves; and in proportion as we more simply and more humbly throw ourselves upon the mercy and help of God in Christ, we shall be more strongly drawn towards Him in whom alone we find real relief, real rest, real strength, and real peace. As soon as ever the moments which we spend on our knees before God in prayer become, as they surely will become to all who try the experiment, the most refreshing, the most invigorating, and the most comforting, of the whole day; as soon as we begin to look forward to them as our chief help, and back to them as our chief solace; we shall have learned one great part of the lesson of non-conformity to the world, because we shall have begun to take a personal interest in, and to feel a personal connection with, the world above and the world beyond. We shall have begun to learn something, though it be as yet but little, of the mind of those who belonged to eternity, not to time, because Jesus, their hope and their life, had passed already through death into the world of resurrection and of immortality.

Thus it is written, Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. Intercourse with Christ, and with God through Him, by the Holy Spirit, is the infusing of a new element, a new character, into the heart which practises it. It is this which is to transform us from the likeness of the one world into the likeness of the other. It is this which must make us unworldly. It is this which must make us heavenly. God grant us this; this renewing of the mind by communion with Christ, by the communication of His Spirit; and then all will be ours. No amount of exertion in the cause of benevolence or of charity will do anything for us without earnest, frequent, cherished intercourse with God through Christ in prayer. No degree of scrupulosity in avoiding worldly society or denying ourselves worldly pleasure, will do anything for us without this positive access, as of mind to mind, and spirit to spirit, to the presence of Jesus Christ Himself, and of God with whom He is one. 'Through Him we both have access by one

Spirit unto the Father.' 'Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Me. Without Me ye can do nothing.'

DEAN VAUGHAN.

Against Conformity to this World.

And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. ROMANS xii. 2.

IN the early ages of the Church, the point, which, more than all others in the Christian religion, drew upon it the hatred of the heathen world, was its absolute incompatibility with the other religious systems then established amongst the nations. Had it been possible to unite this new religion with the impure and horrible contrivances of men; had its Divine Founder simply claimed a place amongst the heathen gods; in other words, had Christianity been anything but what we find it to be, it is probable that it would have been accepted, not only without opposition, but with gratitude and joy. But the object of the institution was widely different. It proclaimed boldly to the world that 'all the gods of the heathen, they were but silver and gold, but that it was the Lord that made the heavens.' It declared the sacrifices and oblations, not only of the Gentile, but of the Jew likewise, except as connected with the sacrifice of Christ, to be vain; the incense and the fat of rams to be abomination in the sight of God; and it pointed for salvation to the only effectual Sacrifice, that of the Lamb, who was slain from the foundation of the world. It demanded from its followers an absolute and unconditional rejection of all these vanities, the entire putting off of the old man, the renewing of the heart and mind. 'Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.'

I. With regard to the term 'world,' its general sense in Scripture is equivalent to the word 'mammon,' as used by our Lord on the occasion alluded to. Mammon appears to be the personification of the world, the god of wealth, covetousness, sensual pleasures, pride, and selfishness. The term 'world' is used in many passages of Scripture in the sense of all that is opposed to Christ and His religion. It includes our own evil habits and propensities, the corruptions of our unconverted nature, as well as the pomps and vanities which give a false glitter to life, and 'all the evil that is done under the sun,' 'all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which is not of the

Father, but of the world;' and above all it implies that enemy of mankind, that real and tremendous being, who is specially called 'the Prince of this world.' To be conformed to this world, therefore, in its general sense, is to identify ourselves with evil, and with the author of it, to obey our sinful appetites, to follow wicked example, and to shape our hearts and minds to such dispositions, as are suitable to those who 'eat and drink,' because 'to-morrow they die.'

II. It is worthy of remark, that the word, here and elsewhere translated 'world,' may also mean 'age or generation,' and the whole warning would thus be *expressly* directed against conformity to the spirit of the age, whatever that spirit may be. In every generation and in all the several individuals of whom each generation is made up, there are tendencies to evil, which, if not counteracted by the grace of God, must end in the entire abandonment of righteousness and truth; and, as in every age the majority are wicked, the apostolic precept is alike applicable, though in different degrees, to all the shifting forms of human depravity.

From all that has been said, it will be perceived, that 'the world,' as described in Scripture, is something very different from *general society*, a word which is equivalent to it in common acceptation. Man is by nature a social being; and by religion his social qualities and capabilities are so far from being injured or contracted, that they are extended, multiplied, and exalted, not less than they are purified and refined. Wherever man is, there is the proper sphere of the Christian, there is his best discipline and trial, there the fittest place for exercising all the excellent charities of the gospel. It was not, therefore, the Apostle's intention to forbid conformity with the *innocent* fashions, customs and enjoyments, of society. If he had so intended, then indeed the monk and the hermit would be right, and a life of gloom, of solitude and of abstract meditation, is the real way to Christian perfection. But there is nothing in the text of any part of Scripture to sanction such retirement. In the Apostle's sense, comprising, as it does, all the sources of corruption within us and without us, 'this world' can hardly be excluded even from the recluse's cell; whilst it is possible on the other hand, so to 'use this world as not abusing it,' to be 'in the world and yet not of the world,' to select innocent and edifying society, and, rather purifying others than ourselves corrupted, to 'live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,' though, it may be, in the midst of a faithless and perverse generation.

Without a life of holiness indeed, and without a new heart and a new spirit, it is impossible to prove 'what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God.' The natural man perceiveth not the

things of God. Spiritual knowledge depends upon spiritual practice, and he alone who is far advanced in the path of righteousness is qualified to judge of the value of the gospel dispensation. Mere *intellectual* exertion indeed may teach the truth of our religion, but the beauty of holiness, the riches of God's mercy, can only be embraced by a heart purified from the corruptions of the world 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Purity and holiness of conversation, a life of penitence, and humility, and devotion, clear up the clouds, which hang over the faculties of the natural man, and show the full brightness of the Messiah's kingdom; doubt and difficulty vanish away; and the glorious certainties of our redemption dawn upon our awakened understandings, till, at length, the light of the Holy Spirit increasing, we see the Sun of Righteousness in all His noon-tide glory. R. E. JELF.

On the Danger of Conformity to Foreign Customs.

And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. ROMANS xii. 2.

THE subject for examination is 'conformity to the habits and practices of those nations amongst whom we may chance to sojourn;' a subject not without difficulties, but one which, by God's blessing upon a spirit of candour and charity, may yet be so treated as to give pain and offence to no one whose feelings deserve consideration.

I. It must be observed also, that much of the danger, especially to the young and inexperienced, arises not so much from any difference in point of vice existing between foreign nations and our own, as from the altered relations in which the traveller stands to the same temptation in different countries. It is unfortunately too true, that, either from mutual imitation, or from the human corruption common to all, the same vices will be found in various proportions throughout the civilised world, and that great cities in particular too nearly resemble each other in the hideous features which they display. But the difference is, that what might be innocuous at home becomes dangerous abroad. And the reason is, that the person, exposed to temptation has changed his position, and with it his frame of mind. The primary motives and helps to holiness, religious principle, religious example, religious observances, may still hold their place in his heart, but they do not often obtrude themselves upon his attention. That, which is good and religious in the character of the nation which he visits lies hidden for the most part in the bosom of private families, of which he generally knows nothing. To make

the matter worse, all the *secondary* restraints are perhaps at the same time withdrawn, the advice and control of parents or guardians, the sanctities of home, the safeguard of regular occupation, the dread of disgrace. He stands alone, and therefore unprotected; idle, and therefore open to all impressions; unknown, and therefore unabashed and unreproved. He lives in public, and in public amusements and occupations; and he becomes familiar with dissipation and thoughtlessness, with all the evil in short which floats on the surface of society, and he sees only so much of the good, as occasionally emerges from the tranquil depths, in which excellence is generally buried. And then, after all these predisposing circumstances, lastly comes curiosity, and a desire of gathering information, under the specious pretext of fulfilling the objects of travelling.

II. The conduct of each of us in this matter is not only an individual concern, but of the most vital importance to our nation and to our Church. It can hardly be doubted, that a great change has been for some years observable amongst our countrymen, in their social and their religious dispositions, and there is no assignable reason more likely to be the true one, than the indiscriminate intercourse between the Continent and ourselves, which the happy cessation of war has permitted. If we find a larger proportion than usual of our people lax and neutral, if not perverted, in their principles, reckless and profligate in their practice, despisers and mockers of what is holy, true, and venerable; if we find, that disobedience to rulers, hatred of divine ordinances, dissipation and vice, infidelity and atheism are on the increase amongst us, and that to an alarming degree, then *some part* of this unhealthy state may be attributed to the influence of such habits as have been acquired in those countries where vice is more accessible, where insubordination perhaps prevails, where Christianity is perverted or despised.

'Be not conformed to this world.' Let your present state of sojourn remind you of your spiritual pilgrimage; in all your wanderings, remember that you are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth; and so regulate your conduct in every land as those that seek a country eternal in the heavens. R. E. JELF.

The Fashion of this World.

And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. ROMANS xii. 2.

THE fact that 'the fashion of this world' is changeable and uncertain makes it harder to give definite rules as to the way to avoid being 'fashioned according to this world.' S. Paul

does not attempt to do so; he does not say, 'Such and such talk, such and such employments, such and such pleasures, are worldly: therefore the servants of God must avoid them;' but he gives us the warning against accommodating ourselves to the fashion, whatever it be, of this world; that warning holds good however the fashion may change.

For the fashion of this world does change—change, sometimes and in some respects, for the better, sometimes for the worse. This is why the world never is to be trusted, even when it seems to require goodness of those who follow its fashions. There are sins and vices that are fashionable at one time and in one class, and at another time, or in another class of people, they are not; and people will seem to be better—will be better in one particular point—when they are no better at heart, but are merely following the fashion; but then they will take to some new vice, which the fashion of the world bears with, or very likely drop back into the old one, if the fashion changes again, and the world bears with what it once condemned.

I. The first words of the text, bidding us not to be fashioned according to this world, are no more than reason ought to teach men, apart from the gospel of Christ. It is, however, by no means as a mere matter of reason apart from the gospel that the Apostle puts the command. It follows immediately on those words, 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service:' 'the mercies of God,' and the service which is reasonable in view of these, are the motives that he appeals to. For one thing, the mere human reason, the mere knowledge of what is good and expedient for ourselves, is not a strong enough power to make people follow it; unreasonable as it may be, the fashion of this world has more power over them than their own judgment. Reason, to adapt S. Paul's words about another matter, is 'weak through the flesh;' it is only part of human nature, and though it ought to be the governing and guiding part of it, yet when human nature is disordered, it is possible—indeed, it is almost the necessary meaning of human nature being out of order—that the man is *not* governed by reason, but follows some other guidance against reason. Therefore a Power, outside and above human nature, above even human reason, which is the highest part of nature, is needed, to set right the disorder in the mind that has been brought in by sin, and to enable the man to live a really reasonable, self-governed life. Reason may teach a man what he ought to do; but it needs grace, and the faith which, being itself given by grace, asks for and obtains more grace, if the

man is to have the will, the power, and the courage to do what he knows he ought.

II. But this is not all that the Gospel does, beyond what reason could do. 'Be not fashioned according to this world,' says S. Paul, '*but* be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind;' not only is our mind to be renewed, to be set right where it is disordered, but the renewal is to be more than an amendment, a reformation, it is to be a transformation, a change into something different, into a new nature. Nor does he stop here, but goes on, 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' Not merely what human nature at its best teaches us we ought to do, but what the will of God requires us to do—that is the rule which the Apostle would set in the place of following the fashion of this world.

G. H. SIMCOX.

The Great Transformation.

Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.
ROMANS xii. 2.

THE Apostle here brings to a conclusion all his previous address; he beseeches his readers, 'by the mercies of God' which he has unfolded, to 'present a living, holy, reasonable sacrifice to Him.' What that sacrifice is to be, what the worship, what the victim, what the life-blood which is to give it virtue, what the incense which is to give it fragrance, what the feast which is to accompany it, is the subject of the remaining chapters of his argument—the 12th, 13th, 14th, till in the 15th chapter he winds up the whole of his address with the same figure—'the offering up of the Gentiles, acceptable, consecrated with the consecration of the Holy Ghost.' Let us take that first characteristic which the Apostle gives of the holiness and savour of the sacrifice, namely, the *unworldly* character of the Christian life. 'Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.' 'Be not made like to the fashion of this fleeting, vanishing age' (so the words may be more fully drawn out according to their original meaning), 'but be ye transfigured into a higher and brighter and more lasting form, by the renewal, the reconstruction, the re-formation of your minds.' What then is the contrast which the Apostle draws between the character which goes along with the fashion of this world, and the character which is renewed so as to see what is above the world? Here, no doubt, as in many like distinctions, the divisions of the

world and of the Church—of the secular world and of the religious world—cross and recross each other in a hundred directions. Who will venture to say whether he or his neighbour does or does not belong to the world? Who would not, in one sense, desire to 'know the world,' to be 'a man of the world,' to be 'on a level with the time,' to be 'not behind the age'? Who would not, in another sense, at least in his better moments, desire to be above the world, to give up the world, 'to renounce' (according to the old familiar words of the Catechism) 'the pomps and vanities' of this wicked, this foolish, this tyrannical, this unprofitable, this miserable world? Yet, though the two classes are closely mixed up together, though the two characters are closely mixed up together, even in the same person, yet still there is a truth in the Apostle's words,—there is still a truth in our common expressions,—there is such a thing as a worldly spirit, and there is such a thing as an unworldly spirit, and according as we partake of one or the other, the savour of the sacrifice of our lives is ordinary, commonplace, poor, and base; or elevating, invigorating, useful, noble, and holy.

I. Before going into any details, let us observe that an unworldly spirit, a spirit above the world, may be seen in what the Apostle calls 'the transfiguration' even of mere worldly virtues. There are doubtless gifts and graces which we do see in the world, which the world honours, nay, more, which, if we take the common divisions of men, are sometimes seen more in the world than in the Church, justice, integrity, truth, candour, prudence. Very few men are to be found who will not admire these; in this respect we might almost say that we cannot go wrong in conforming ourselves to the world. Yet even here it is possible for an unworldly spirit to transfigure these worldly excellencies. One high heroic instance of truth, or justice, or courage, is worth a hundred lesser cases, the world is startled by it. Heroes and saints are indeed the salt of the world, and the light of the world; a life is spread by them into the putrifying mass, a glory streams from them into the dark void. Their summits reflect a light which remains there when it has vanished everywhere else; their example, whilst it makes us feel far below them, yet in a manner annihilates space and time and brings us near to them. And let us all remember also, that, in proportion to the grace and dignity given by a true, religious, unworldly spirit, even to the noblest worldly virtues, is the mischief wrought by the absence of worldly virtues in those who think and call themselves unworldly. They are indeed 'the salt which has lost its savour,' fit for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. We hear much of the stumbling-blocks thrown in the way of the propagation of Christianity by the unchristian lives of Christians in

foreign parts. Let us remember that there is no greater stumbling-block in the way of the reception of true religion by men of the world than the uncandid, untruthful, unjust, ungenerous deeds, and words, and tempers seen among men who profess to be, and who, in a certain sense, 'are not of the world.'

II. But over and above this transfusion of a higher life into worldly virtues, there are also qualities which, we may say, are unworldly in themselves—the very light within and from above, which gives even to earthly goodness its highest and most lasting glory. Let us briefly see what they are.

1. First is that which the Apostle himself gives us as the best example, namely, *Humility*. 'Let not a man think of himself more highly than he ought to think.' In Pagan times there was no name for this grace. The very word is a 'new creation' of the gospel of Christ. True Christian humility is unlike the course of the world, and it is an inestimable advantage to mankind to have gained it.

2. Secondly, there is what may seem almost inconsistent with humility, but what does really flow from it more truly than from any other source—*independence* of the world's opinion. To think little of ourselves and much of others is the natural consequence of not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, and, in the end, it leads us to think little of the opinion which even those whose good we seek may choose to form of us. 'With me it is a very small thing that I shall be judged of you or of men's judgment. He that judgeth me is the Lord.' That is a true unworldly maxim. It is safe, it is prudent, to conform ourselves to the fashion of the world; it is safe, it is prudent, it is worldly wise, to swim with the stream, to leave the falling house, to desert the sinking vessel. It is safe, it is prudent, and in the eyes of the worldly man it covers a multitude of sins, if we avoid the stricken deer, and howl with the wolves lest they tear us to pieces also. This is the way of the world. Do this, and you will have an easy life, you will hear all men speak well of you, you will advance and move on with the great machine of which you have become a part. But there is, thank God, another way which is not the way of the world. There is an old Christian virtue of which the name breathes the savour of former days, but which lingers, we trust, amongst us still. *Chivalry*—the desire to protect the weak, and repress the strong, the leaning to the weaker side, because it is the weaker, the holding out against the strong, because it is the stronger; this, as we all know, is an unworldly virtue. He who was in the world, yet not of the world, He—with reverence be it said, as it has been said, with the reverence of deep understanding of this His unearthly mission—He is the leader of Christian chivalry, in their knightly errand against

injustice and wrong and falsehood. 'I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. . . . And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.'

3. Thirdly, let me touch on the grace which these last words suggest—'cleanness,' 'whiteness,' '*purity*.' Must we not confess that for the world, for society at large, this grace is hardly recognised? The judgment of the world, for one half of mankind, hardly seems to require it. Against the pressure of this judgment nothing but a principle which is above the world can avail. How, humanly speaking, shall we hope to stay the secret sins of uncleanness, which undermine and destroy, with a wide desolation, the well-being of our homes, high and low, unless there are amongst us hearts which shrink from what God abhors, which do what is right and pure, not because men see them, but because God sees them . . .? 'These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth;' these are they which save us all from destruction.

4. Fourthly, there is that which lies at the foundation of humility, of disinterestedness, of every other unworldly virtue, that which is in some sense another name for religion itself, *resignation*. Where shall we find the calmness, the serenity, the elevation of soul, which can disentangle itself from the confusion, console others, console itself, stand aloof, make its voice heard above the roar, be tranquil in the midst of battle, and shipwreck, and perplexity, and ruin, be pure in the midst of corruption, and steadfast in the midst of the whirlpool? This is an unworldly good which even worldly men covet when they see it. This is indeed to be transfigured by 'a renewing of the inward man, which day by day is renewed, though the outward man perish.'

III. These are the chief virtues, manifestly not of the world,—humility, chivalrous independence, purity, calm resignation. Are they disappointing? are they unworthy of the name? No, they have many great results. Let us content ourselves with two, still bearing on the same Christian salutation of which we have spoken.

1. What concern have they with the glory of God? They have this concern (the Apostle tells us), 'That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' This is one result of the attitude into which we are put by humility, by disinterestedness, by purity, by calmness, that we have the opportunity, the disengagement, the silence, in which we may watch what is the will of God concerning us. If we think no more of ourselves than we ought to think, if we seek not our own but others' welfare,

if we are prepared to take all things as God's dealings with us, then we may have a chance of catching from time to time what God has to tell us. In the Mussulman devotions one constant gesture is to put the hands to the ears, as if to listen for the messages from the other world. This is the attitude, the posture which our minds assume, if we have a standing-place above and beyond the stir and confusion and dissipation of this mortal world.

2. How does the cultivation of unworldly thoughts promote goodwill towards men? If in one way it carries us off from men, yet in another way it brings us nearer to them. Look at the great natural divisions of mankind, the rich and poor, the clever and the dull, the learned and the ignorant. How are these to be brought together? What qualities have they in common? Will the gifts which the world most admires help us to this end? No; we must turn elsewhere for these bonds of union.

Most truly, indeed, has it been said that 'reason, and reflection, and education, and the experience of age, and the force of manly sense, are not the links which bind us to the communion of the body of Christ. It is rather to those qualities which we have, or may have, in common with our fellow-men, that the gospel is promised. It is not with the strong-minded, the resolute, the consistent, but with the weak, the poor, the babes in Christ that we shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven.'

A. P. STANLEY.

The Christian Life a Transfiguration.

Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.
ROMANS xii. 2.

THERE are three things that strike me in these words, where S. Paul begins, namely with an inward change; what he expects from the inward change, a life transfigured; and what he is sure will be the result of such a transfigured life, a growing unlikeness to the fleeting fashion of this world. So we have to look briefly at these three things.

I. Where S. Paul begins,—with an inward renewal, 'the renewing of your mind.' He goes deep down, because he had learned in his Master's school who said: 'Make the tree good and the fruit good.' To tinker at the outside with a host of anxious rules about conduct, and red-tape restrictions and prescriptions, is all waste time and vain effort. You may wrap a man up in the swaddling bands of specific precepts until you can scarcely see him, and he cannot move, and you

have not done a bit of good. We have to go deeper than that, down to the 'hidden man of the heart' to touch the inward springs of actions.

Still further, not only have we to begin in the middle, but there has to be a radical change in the middle, the renewing of the mind, the making of the mind over again. 'The mind,' I suppose, is here taken in a somewhat popular sense, for S. Paul is not teaching psychology, but practical morality. The word seems to be equivalent to the thinking faculty, the 'intellect' as we say, but, possibly, to be used in a somewhat wider sense as including the whole inner man, with feelings and desires, as well as thoughts. That inner man has got a wrong twist somehow; it needs to be re-created, made anew, moulded over again. For in all of us, apart from this renovating and ennobling influence, it is what S. Paul calls 'the mind of the flesh,' or human nature unredeemed and unregenerate. It is held in slavery and submission to the external—to the material; it is a mass of affections fixed upon transient or low thoughts. A predominant self-regard characterises it and its actions. That is a sad stern picture.

Then another step here is: this new creation of the inner man is only possible as the result of the communication of a life from without. That communicated life from without is the life of Jesus Christ Himself put into your heart, on condition of your simply opening the door of your heart by faith, and saying to Him, 'Come in, Thou blessed of the Lord.' And He comes in, bearing in His hands this gift most chiefly, the gift of a germ of life which will mould and shape our 'mind' after His own blessed pattern.

II. So much for the first point that is here. Now a word or two about the second; the transfigured life which follows upon that inward renewal. The word in our text, 'Be ye *transformed* by the renewal of your minds,' is the same as is employed in two of the evangelists' accounts of our Lord's transfiguration. And it is never employed except there and here, and once besides.

I daresay it would be going too far to say that in selecting this word the Apostle had in his mind any allusion to that incident, but the coincidence is, at all events, remarkable; and we may, I think, fairly take that event as illustrating very beautifully the nature of the change which should pass over us. In the transfiguration, our Lord's indwelling divinity seems as it were to have come floating up to the surface for once, and to have been made visible. So in like manner from within to the outward edge of the being, this renewed mind shall work, irradiating our faces with a diviner beauty, and turning even this 'muddy vesture of decay' into snowy whiteness, 'so as no fuller on earth shall be able to white' it. 'A transfigured life' suggests to us, in the light of the story, even nobler and loftier aspira-

tions and hopes than the phrase, 'a transformed life.' There lie in it, and in the context, some important thoughts. It suggests that the inward life, if it is healthy and true and strong, will certainly shape the outward conduct and character. Even as the fashion of His countenance was altered, so the inner life of Christ deep and true in a man's heart will write its presence in his countenance, and show how awful and how blessed goodness is.

A certain kind of seaweeds that lie at the bottom of the sea, when their flowering time comes, elongate their stalks and reach the light and float upon the top, and then, when they have flowered and fruited, they sink again into the depths. Our Christian life should come up to the surface and open out its flowers there, and show them to the heavens and to all eyes that look. Does your Christianity do that? It is no use talking about the inward change unless there is the outward transfiguration. Ask yourselves the question whether that is visible or not in your lives.

And then, still further, this image of our text suggests to us that the essential character of our transfiguration is the moulding of us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Christ's life is in you if you are in Him.

III. Lastly, let us consider the ultimate consequence which the Apostle regards as certain, from this central inward change; viz., the unlikeness to the world around. 'Be not conformed to this world.'

I need not spend time in discussing the notion to be attached to the expression, 'this world.' Suffice it for our present purpose to say it stands for the whole mass of men and things apart from God. And the 'fashion of the world' is the whole set of maxims, opinions, thoughts, theories, views of life, pursuits, of such men.

We all know well enough what the world is, by the specimen of it that we have inside of ourselves, but the principle that I want to insist upon is this: that the more we get like Jesus Christ, the more certainly we get unlike the world.

For the two theories of life are clean contrary, the one is all limited by this 'bank and shoal of time,' the other stretches out through the transient to lay hold on the Infinite and Eternal. The one is all for self, the other is all for God, with His will for law, and His love for motive. The two theories are contrary the one to the other, so that likeness to and adherence to the one must needs be death in the teeth of the other.

Unless our unlikeness to the world is the result of our growing likeness to Christ, it is of little value. It is useless to preach unworldliness to men unless they have Christ in their hearts. The great means of becoming unlike the world is becoming like Him, and the great means of becoming like Him is living near Him and drinking

in His life and Spirit. So we shall be delivered from the world's tyranny.

So, a great hope is offered to every man; even the foolishest, the weakest, the most vile and degraded. There is nobody so deeply stamped with the mark and superscription of the Beast, but that it may be erased from his forehead, and printed there the sign and the token of the Lamb. We cannot, by any effort, mould our natures afresh. But we can open our hearts to the entrance of Christ's transforming life. That will change all the hard, obstinate nature, as a furnace conquers the masses of ore cast into it until they become fluid in proportion as they absorb the heat. So we may be melted by the love and moulded into the likeness of our Lord.

A. MACLAREN.

Modesty.

For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. ROMANS xii. 3.

THERE is no temptation more fruitful of a weak and foolish egotism than the gift of a certain wordy fluency, and the light adoption of the awful and holy vocation to be a teacher of men. It was in view of the terrible certainty of this insidious temptation that the Apostle Paul declares that the grace of God given unto him had taught him to plead with every man 'not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.'

I. You will understand by this why it is that I venture to affirm that this sin of immodesty and conceit has alienated the thoughtful and earnest soul from Christ's Church, and sometimes even from Christ's truth, more than those flagrant fleshly vices which are the abomination of all right-thinking men. There are churches, I fancy, where the most distressing feature is the assumption of important and prominent positions by men who make no pretence whatever to a religious life or Christian convictions. There is certainly no more humiliating consideration than this, that the mere veneer of religion, where there is no depth of reality, no sense of the wonder and the mystery of spiritual life, no awful joy of divine possession, is something only that makes the prominent faults of an ungodly life more shameless and detestable. A religious vocabulary where there has been no vital experience, the offensive assumption of familiarity with awful and sacred themes, the glib and shallow utterance of beliefs which the greatest Christians have entertained with fear and trembling in their souls, the easy, self-confident, superior manner of condemning all but one's-self and mourning all sins but one's own—

these are some of the hideous characteristics of the religious prig, whose language and life makes at once the sinners to scoff and the saints to shudder.

II. Notice the Apostle Paul's special specific for this temptation to immodesty. It was to remind himself, whenever he felt it exerting a power over him that, as he said, 'Jesus Christ came to save sinners, of which I am chief.' C. S. HORNE.

III. OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

A Glimpse of the Holy Childhood of Jesus.

S. Luke ii. 41-52.

I. HE evangelists tells us but very little of the outward circumstances of our Saviour's life during the first thirty years; indeed, there can have been but little to tell, for those circumstances and surroundings were probably as simple and unpretending as they could well be. Day must have followed day in peaceful monotony; and the words of S. Luke, when he describes the childhood of the Baptist, may well apply to that of Jesus also: 'He was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel' (S. Luke i. 80).

Now this very poverty of outward details is a remarkable point in the history of our Lord, and is eminently characteristic of Him in opposition to the lives of other men. In the ordinary course of things, man is gradually developed, and grows up in the midst of various outward circumstances, which give a tone to his whole life and character, while at the same time inward dispositions are working in him. Without both, or at least without one or other of these two influencing powers, man must in his natural state of weakness, ever remain at a very low stage of development indeed; and experience teaches us that the more we receive these influences, the more do we become moulded by them.

To this universal law of nature, which we see carried out every day before our eyes, the life of our Lord forms a singular exception. His personality stands out in a distinctness and completeness of development as none other does in the history of the world. And let us see that we fully grasp this idea, that He was not influenced either by outward events, or by any favourable influences passing

around Him. Moreover, that His development was carried on under a totally different system from our own. And why was this? Why, but because in Him there was never wanting that great life's motive, whose power is, through sin, weakened and misdirected in us, though in Him, in His innate purity, nothing was needed but the indwelling and moving power of the Holy Ghost to kindle it into its fullest perfection. Thus it was that, for the unfolding of the holy life of Jesus, nothing could have been more favourable than the absence of outward influence in the events of daily life, or of human instruments in the moulding of His character, for both of these, contaminated as they are by sin, could only have hindered and marred the power that was working in Him.

The divine life and consciousness unfolded themselves in our Saviour step by step with the human. The essential fulness of the Godhead, indissolubly formed as it was in Him with the holy Manhood, was, for the time, so to speak, veiled from Him by a curtain, and only to be seen and understood by Him, as by us now, with the eye of faith; moreover, the clearness and extent of that faith were dependent on the extent of His consciousness of Himself as man. In the meantime, we need no stronger proof of our point, so far as we have gone, than the expressive testimony of the evangelist, written in the verses immediately preceding and succeeding those of our text: 'And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him' (ver. 40). 'And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man' (ver. 52).

II. It was the custom in Judea that the male children at the age of twelve years should accompany their parents for the first time to Jerusalem. From that time forward they came under the power of the law, and were called 'Sons of the Law.' A remarkable era was this in the life of every Jewish boy, and pre-eminently so in the case of our blessed Lord, who probably had long looked forward to it as a time when a new world should be opened out to Him, and with it a new side of His own life in and with His heavenly Father. This long-desired period had come now. Among the vast crowds of pilgrims journeying to Jerusalem were the members of Joseph's family. The feast of the Passover falls in Palestine at the season when spring is in its richest beauty, and the road from Nazareth to the holy city led through a lovely region, especially pleasing in the fertile plains of Jezreel, a district rich in recollections of prosperous days gone by. For the first time did the outer world reveal itself to the boy Jesus in the fulness of the glory of God; for the first time did the full spring of life burst forth in His heart; and perhaps, too, for the first time did that mysterious presentiment come over Him

that He, this poor boy, who felt within himself such an overflow of joy in the creation of His Father, might indeed be that very One by whom the Father made all things, and 'without whom was not anything made that was made' (S. John i. 3).

He felt that the temple was His home, not the village of Nazareth. Here was His true native land, His Father's house, and the scene of all his dearest longings and recollections. Nothing but a direct command from His heavenly Father, conveyed through His earthly parents, could have turned His steps from Jerusalem back to Nazareth. He had not been sought for, and therefore He had been lost. It was not His will that His parents should suffer anxiety on His account, but He knew full well from whence the unexpected command came—it was the voice of His heavenly Father that He heard in it. He thanked Him that He was no longer to withhold from Him the blessed joys of His Temple, and delayed not one moment in repairing to His new-found refuge; he 'must be' where His Father is, and He seats Himself at once among the learned men in the Temple, to hear them and ask them questions.

Mary and Joseph missed their Child, and their hearts were filled with anguish and self-reproach. They still had a hope that they might find Him in one of the other caravans, amongst kindred or friends. They sought their lost Jesus amidst flesh and blood, as those do now who think to find Him amidst outward works and practices and fail in their search. So it was with the earthly parents of Jesus; their labour was fruitless, and on the following morning they retraced their steps to the holy city, and after a long and anxious search they found Him, their beloved Child, on the third day, sitting in the Temple amongst the doctors, not indeed learning of them, but creating universal astonishment at the depth of His scriptural knowledge, and at the marvellous intelligence of His questions and answers.

If we could only understand Jesus aright in our inmost hearts, we could never be in perplexity as to where to look for Him, if by any chance we have lost Him. 'Do ye not know,' He would say to us again, 'do ye not know, and ye have been told it by the mouths of the angels, by the shepherds, by the Magi, by Simeon, by Anna, and by many of the prophecies of Scripture, that I must be about my Father's business, and that this very obligation is a proof of my inward union with the Father, a token of my obedience to Him which belongs exclusively to my person? Do ye not know that another Father than Joseph has sought me, that I, O mother, am not only thy son, but also the Son of the Most High, and therefore I am not under thy commands alone' (alluding to her words, 'Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing)?' 'Do ye not know that the very

essence of my life is in my nearness to and companionship with God, and that my first duty is to do His business in His house? "The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him" (S. John viii. 29). "I have meat to eat that ye know not of . . . My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work"' (S. John iv. 32-34). R. ROTHE.

Christ and Human Understanding.

Sitting in the midst of the doctors. S. Luke ii. 46.

'SITTING in the midst of the doctors.' We must be careful in considering this sole incident of our blessed Lord's boyhood to keep strictly within the limits of what is actually written in the gospels. Christian sentiment, Christian art, and commonly accepted notions are not always quite true guides.

I. To begin with, that Jesus should be found thus sitting among the doctors was not in itself anything unusual, but quite customary and a matter of course. Round the sacred precincts of the Temple were chambers where the Rabbis sat for this very purpose, and to these the Jewish lads, who came up to keep the Passover, resorted, to be catechised and instructed in the Law and the Holy Scriptures. Jesus, therefore, went there just as the other boys of His own age did.

Nor, again, when there, are we to picture Him as acting in an unusual way. He assumed no extraordinary attitude as a teacher, among the Rabbis, as some pictures have represented Him; He behaved in no way differently from the rest—at any rate, there is not a word in S. Luke to warrant the assumption that He did so. 'Sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions,' that is what the gospel record says. 'Hearing them;' that is, listening like the rest, respectfully and as a pupil, to their instructions.

Clearly, then, in all this scene there is not a word to indicate anything like assumption of authority on the part of the Holy Child; one cannot help feeling that had He shown any such He would have been rebuked by the Rabbis for doing so, and that certainly it would have been used against Him in later years, had He been recorded to have done anything of the kind at the age of twelve; in those final days, I mean, when everything that could be raked up, of deed or word of His, was used to justify His suppression and removal. But, still further, I cannot but feel that such an exhibition would have been wholly contrary to that respect which He enjoined in His later teaching, when the scribes and doctors were even less worthy of

regard. 'The scribes and Pharisees sit,' He said, 'in Moses's seat; whatsoever therefore they command you, that observe and do.' And, again, we may well question whether our blessed Lord was Himself at all prepared as yet for any such assertion of His person and of His claims. We know it was not until He was thirty years old, eighteen years after this, that He commenced His divine mission; we do not even know how far His human mind was conscious of that mission up to this point, although indeed some have seen, with a good deal of probability, in the allusion to 'My Father's business,' an indication that at this very crisis that human consciousness of the divine Fatherhood and its consequent mission began.

II. And now, regarding this incident in its true bearings, we shall find some great lessons deducible from it for learning and for our comfort.

1. And in the forefront this, the relation in which this true and real manhood of Jesus Christ stands to our own in regard to matters of the mind and intellect. What perfect sympathy with all our mental infirmities and intellectual perplexities, all our difficulties and dangers in arriving at certain knowledge and secure belief, can He feel for us, who can look back to those years in Galilee and Jerusalem, when His own human mind was expanding to the apprehension of divine truth, and when He, as boy and man, was working His way, as we have to work ours, to full creaturely intelligence! He knows, therefore, the many by-paths along that way of truth, the many seductive voices that would lead our minds astray to the right or to the left; He is 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities,' mental as well as bodily. He has infinite patience, therefore, with doubters, whose doubts are honest and whose hearts are humble; only remember they must be that. With the doubt that does not doubt itself, which has pride behind it and pride within it, Christ can have no sympathy; for of all human souls His was the most absolutely humble. 'Learn of Me; I am meek and lowly in heart.'

2. But secondly, we learn from our Lord's true boyhood and mental growth in what manner and by what means all such growth must be attained.

(*a*) What a lesson, first of all, as to the necessity of study, and mental effort and earnest use of the faculties with which God has endowed us each!

(*b*) Again, it is surely significant that the basis of that boyish 'understanding' was the knowledge of Holy Scripture. Like Timothy later, 'from a child He had known the Holy Scriptures.'

Men nowadays, Christian men sometimes, incline to treat lightly these Old Testament Scriptures, to cavil at the date or authorship of a psalm or a prophecy; yet from these the Son of Man drew into His

human mind divine truth and the knowledge of the divine will. 'Search the Scriptures,' He said; 'they are they which testify of Me.' Might we not profit by His experience and by His advice? Is it not a warning to teachers to give to instruction in the Holy Scriptures the first place in their system of education, and to parents that they send their children to schools where this is done?

(*c*) But, again, we have in the Holy Child an example of the capacity with which a sinless nature can assimilate divine truth. Truly the secret of His wonderful 'understanding' lay very largely in the fact that while in His human nature He was in all points, mental as well as bodily, even as we are, yet He was wholly 'without sin.'

(*d*) Yet, finally, we must remember this, that it is not by mere human intelligence or human study, though these be needed, that divine knowledge is apprehended. There is another faculty, of the soul rather than of the intellect or the mind, which we call spirituality, which is essential for understanding the truth of God. Deep in the human soul of Jesus this spiritual faculty dwelt. It was this that made the sights and sounds of nature, on the soft uplands and quiet valleys of Galilee, full of the thoughts of God, and drew His human soul into the contemplation of that unseen world in which His Godhead from all eternity had lived. It was this that made that first visit to Jerusalem and to the Father's house so full of burning interest and holy joy to the Child of Nazareth, and with it there was joined that deep reverence of spirit which ever characterises the souls in which God is making Himself felt and known. E. J. GOUGH.

Children's Questions.

(*For Children.*)

Asking them questions. S. Luke ii. 46.

I. IN the text we see our Lord, the King of children, who Himself, as he grows in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man, puts out all the beautiful gifts of a stainless childhood, and the one thing that we know about the childhood is that He not only heard, but asked questions. And He asked these questions not about childish matters in the carpenter's shop, at home with His mother at Nazareth, but He asked them in the very heart of the Temple of His Father about the holiest affairs, about His sacred Scriptures. He asked them in the face of the wisest doctors who sat in Moses's seat, whose authority he recognised and honoured, who spent their lives in brooding over the deep mysteries of the faith. He respected them, but He was not awed into silence by

their solemn dignity. They did not hush up His eager inquiries because they were so learned, nor because matters of religion were beyond His rightful ken. It was just the opportunity He desired. He went there for it, He wanted to know about these things. He asked what He wanted just as children ask us. He broke in upon that ring of serious elders with the brilliant naïveté, with the rapid insight that belongs to innocence, with the courage of unconscious simplicity, not going outside His humanity, but justifying it in its own natural capacities, and lifting them to higher power under the transfiguration of His own stainless purity, which could see God. He was a boy, and therefore He asked questions. That was His justification for asking them. He was engaged in His own proper office as a son in His Father's house. He might well ask questions about God, for His Father's interests, His Father's welfare, His Father's honour, His Father's business were surely His as well. 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'

II. Our Lord, then, lends His sanction to children's questions. And we, as we bend to face the relentless questionings of children, have ever to recall the Temple scene—the circle of the doctors buried in profound and absorbing study, poring over sacred records, noting every jot and tittle of the wonderful law, interchanging subtle suggestions, storing up transmitted wisdom, with such a heavy weight of honour upon them and anxious problems pressing for solution. Is childhood to us a sacred thing—soiled often by sin, by ancient wrongs of our own or our forefathers, yet pronounced blessed by Him who took it in His arms and is still in possession of its angel guards, who ever behold the face of our Father which is in heaven? Into Christ's own sinless childhood each child has been baptized; it has recovered its primitive birthright that belonged to it when it was pronounced very good at its first creation, and is renewed to it by its regeneration into the kingdom of the new heavens and the new earth. And now Christ the child stands within each child that He has made and remade; He is there endowing it with His own rights, putting out through it His own claims; still, through it, He, remembering His own boyhood, is asking us questions. It is Christ whom we must recognise in the souls of the children; Christ who puts aside all in them which is merely inquisitive and silly, and impatient, and who stands there as He stood in the midst of the doctors, challenging us to face His innocence, His simplicity, His courage.

III. One word more on children's questions. It is not only an intellectual honesty that they challenge, but they play with all their sharpest shafts upon our moral consistency. 'Why do you do that?' 'Did you mean what you said?' So they are ever

asking, either audibly or in silence. We are anxious enough about the scrutiny and judgment of our fellow men and women, but close at our sides we forget too often the merciless eyes that observe every word and gesture. Grown-up men and women who are conscious of their own condescension to low standards will make allowances for us. Their houses are of glass, they cannot afford to throw stones; but the children! The judgment of the children upon us is untrammelled by any such timidities. Straight, firm, and clear, it issues from their simplicity. There can be no severer proof to which our character can be put than a pure and guileless boy in our midst, asking questions. And if that boy were Jesus Himself, stainless, white, and radiant, if His eye fell upon us and looked us through and through with the searching flame of His purity, what should He see? What questions would He ask? We should know, indeed, what it was to say, 'We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge.' We should fall on our knees and pray with new earnestness, 'We, therefore, pray Thee, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious blood.'

H. SCOTT HOLLAND.

The Two Steerers of Life—Personality and Responsibility.

Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? S. LUKE ii. 48.

I. THE Virgin Mary, in this instance, is the perpetual type of people who, intrusted with any great or sacred interest, identify their own lives with that interest, and care for it conscientiously, but who, when by-and-by the interest begins to manifest its own utility and shape its own methods, are filled with perplexity that they cannot keep the causes for which they labour under their own control. As His Mother asks of Jesus, so they are always asking of the causes for which they care, 'Why hast thou dealt thus with us?' Such people have realised responsibility more than they have realised God. And the answer that is given back to them is, I must be about my Father's business. There are some men who undertake to reform the world who want to keep the whole plan in their own hands, and never think that it is a world which will outgrow their special wisdom.

II. To large men it is nobler and more ennobling to work with God on a material of which He has shown the mystery. A weak Hebrew mother of a poor, stupid boy, who had never left the company to seek the God whom he belonged to, might well have

pitied Mary, and thought her unhappy with her Child. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them. She learned that it was nobler to leave her boy to God, and see Him take God for His Father, than it was to her to have Him to herself. The light of the truest relationship between man and man is not the confessional, the spiritual directorship, where one man gives his life over into another man's hands, but is the frank friendship of generous men, wherein each helps the other, but is always glad to know that he is really helping God to help the other, and so where each rejoices to see the other, under God, outgrow himself.

III. When I take into account that God has His plans for my soul's culture, that these plans of His outgrow and supersede any plans for myself which I can make, then any new turn that comes is explicable to me: and although I may not have contemplated it, I am not overwhelmed or disturbed or dismayed by it, I find a new conviction growing in my soul. I find another view of life, another kind of faith. It is not what I intended. I say, 'Soul, why hast thou thus dealt with me?' And my soul answers back to me, 'Wist ye not that I should be about my Father's business? This, which surprises you so, is something that God, my Father, taught me.'

The other consequence of this great revelation of life—the revelation that the soul for which we care is God's soul and for which He is caring too—will be that the true man will have one great purpose in living—only one; he will try to come to harmony with God, to a perfect understanding of what the eternal nature wants and is trying to do to him. Let me not be trying to make one thing out of this soul of mine while God is trying to make another.

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

The Boyhood of Jesus.

And when they saw Him, they were amazed: and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? S. Luke ii. 48, 49.

IF the veil of silence has fallen on so much that we cannot but desire to look into, with what an outbreak of relief do we fasten on this solitary story which the diligence of S. Luke has been guided to rescue out of all the hidden mystery of growth, for our loving attention! Here he has been allowed to bring before us, not merely the broad or secret process by which our Lord's human nature won its advances, but a most signal moment

of its increase, when it arrived at a new level, as it were, at a bound.

I. Let us turn to our own experience, in order that we may picture to ourselves that perfected form of it which our Lord deigned to embody. In all our own human lives there is some such moment as is here suggested by the narrative. There is a moment at which youth first wakes out of its childhood, and becomes aware of itself. The soul seems suddenly to burst its sheath. Some novel experience strikes it; some impact from without releases the force that had lain dormant. At a touch, in the twinkling of an eye, the chain is snapped, the slumber is broken. We all know how buds that have swollen in silence break open on some happy hour in spring, when winds are warm. So too the soul; it starts; it gives a leap; a door is flung open; swiftly it enters in upon a fresh scene. All that has hitherto lain about it, or occupied it, falls back as a dream, as a childish game. It is made aware of its own spiritual independence, of its own solitary dignity, of its own royal inheritance.

Such a moment is never forgotten, the moment at which the boy ceases to see through the eyes of others, ceases to speak, to think, as others do about him; when he sees with his own eyes, and faces his own world, and seeks for his own interpretation of it. Such moments, when they come, are full of a great awe; we are rapt into a solitude of our own, hidden in which we forget our earlier interests; they have become as a very little thing. We are absorbed in the passion of a spiritual discovery; we are caught up, young though we be, into the solemnity of those swift and sudden intuitions, which have the

> 'Power to make
> Our noisy years seem moments in the being
> Of the eternal silence.'

Such may have been our own experiences, though with us always marred by wilfulness, clouded by conceit. And our blessed Lord lays hold, in this temple-scene, on all that is true and natural in this upspringing stir of opening youth. It is not all conceit, it is not all wilfulness, this sudden tumult of thought that overwhelms us. Nay! at its base is an instinctive motion of the growing manhood in us, designed by God our Maker, inherent in our growth. Therefore the Lord adopts it for His own. He sets His sanctioning seal upon it. And this without offence. For as His human will found scope for its natural efforts within the sheath of his Divine will; as in the Temptation, and at Gethsemane, it 'learned obedience through suffering;' so His human intellect

found place for its normal movements and discipline and expan sion, though held and carried within the compass of the Divine Personality.

II. Our Lord here takes up into His divine humanity a moment in our lives which has in it a peculiar delicacy and a peculiar difficulty. He sanctions and hallows it. He allots it its place. He rescues it from its moral perils. Moral perils! For this moment, at which our conscious and growing youth comes to itself, is the moment at which it signalises its own independence from all that has been traditional or derived. It is itself, and not another's. That is its discovery. That is what so suddenly startles it. Hitherto it has, as it were, still lain within the womb of childhood. Now it recognises, as it never had done before, that it has its own private and personal work, its own private story to work out, its own life to create, its own spring of joys and sorrows, its own right to its own feelings, hopes, imaginations, thoughts. It must answer for itself to its own conscience. It must bear its own burden. It must die alone, and alone it must stand before the judgment-seat of God.

So it learns, and it learns it often, in a sudden moment of self-revelation. Aud that first moment must be a moral crisis for each one of us. How will we behave in it? What will be the use we make of such a tremendous freedom? The happiness of our home-life stands or falls with our decision. Too well we know, in our broken day, the bitter wrecks of home and of peace, of brotherly love and charity, which these hours of new-won independence have strewn thick about our path. What family has not some pitiful split to deplore, some gnawing worry, some sore wound that will not heal; and all because of some failure in the conduct of this fateful hour?

Turn we, then, in our need, to watch how the Lord Himself deals with this particular crisis in His own life.

1. First, it is clear that He claimed His full liberty. He could not deny Himself the right to act for Himself, to inquire for Himself, to make good His own independence. We also have rights in the Father's house. We are charged to be about our Father's business—business with paramount demands upon us, which may have to override father and mother, and sister and brother; which may be driven to divide a house against itself.

2. Yet the freedom is a trust, solemn and awful. We must answer for its use; answer for it to the Body of Christ, in and through which we acquired it; answer for it to the Father, whose business it is that we are about. H. SCOTT HOLLAND.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

'My Father's House.'

Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house? S. Luke ii. 49.

WHAT makes those who give us this translation prefer it to the phrase in the authorised version, 'about My Father's business'?

One or other of two causes—most likely both together: an ecclesiastical fancy, and the mere fact that He was found in the Temple. A mind ecclesiastical will presume the Temple the fittest, therefore most likely place for the Son of God to betake Himself to; but such a mind would not be the first to reflect that the Temple was a place where the Father was worshipped neither in spirit nor in truth—a place built by one of the vilest rulers of this world, less fit than many another spot for the special presence of Him of whom the prophet bears witness: 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'

Of the second possible cause of the change from *business* to *house*—the mere fact that He was found in the Temple, can hardly be a reason for His expecting His parents to know that He was there; and if it witnessed to some way of thought or habit of His with which they were acquainted, it is, I repeat, difficult to see why the parents should fail to perceive what the interpreters have found so easily. But the parents looked for a larger meaning in the words of such a son—whose meaning at the same time was too large for them to find.

When, according to the Greek, the Lord, on the occasion already alluded to, says 'My Father's house,' He says it plainly; He uses the word *house*: here He does not.

Let us see what lies in the Greek to guide us to the thought in the mind of the Lord when He thus reasoned with the apprehensions of His father and mother. The Greek, taken literally, says, 'Wist ye not that I must be in the——of My Father?' The Authorised Version supplies *business*; the Revised *house*. There is no noun in the Greek, and the article 'the' is in the plural. To translate it as literally as it can be translated, making of it an English sentence, the saying stands, 'Wist ye not that I must be in the things of My Father?' The plural article implies the English *things*; and the question is then, What *things* does He mean? The word might mean *affairs* or *business*; but why the plural article should be contracted to mean *house*, I do not know. In a great wide sense, no doubt, the word *house* might be used, as I am about to show, but surely not as meaning the Temple.

He was arguing for confidence in God on the part of His parents, not for a knowledge of His whereabouts. The same thing that made them anxious concerning Him, prevented them from understanding His words—lack, namely, of faith in the Father. This, the one thing He came into the world to teach men, those words were meant to teach His parents. They are spirit and life, involving the one principle by which men shall live. They hold the same core as His words to His disciples in the storm, 'Oh ye of little faith!' Let us look more closely at them.

I. It seems to me, that the Lord meant to remind, or rather to make them feel, for they had not yet learned the fact, that He was never away from home, could not be lost, as they had thought Him; that He was in His Father's house all the time, where no hurt could come to Him. 'The things' about Him were the furniture and utensils of His home; He knew them all and how to use them. 'I must be among My Father's belongings.' The world was His home because His Father's house. He was not a stranger who did not know His way about in it. He was no lost child, but with His Father all the time.

Here we find one main thing wherein the Lord differs from us; we are not at home in this great universe, our Father's house. We ought to be, and one day we shall be, but we are not yet. This reveals Jesus more than man, by revealing Him more man than we. We are not complete men, we are not anything near it, and are therefore out of harmony, more or less, with everything in the house of our birth and habitation. Always struggling to make our home in the world, we have not yet succeeded. We are not at home in it, because we are not at home with the Lord of the house, the Father of the family, not one with our Elder Brother who is His right hand. It is only the son, the daughter, that abideth ever in the house. When we are true children, if not the world, then the universe will be our home, felt and known as such, the house we are satisfied with, and would not change. Hence, until then, the hard struggle, the constant strife we hold with *Nature*—as we call the things of our Father; a strife invaluable for our development, at the same time manifesting us not yet men enough to be lords of the house built for us to live in.

II. Think for a moment how Jesus was at home among the things of His Father. It seems to me a spiritless explanation of His words—that the Temple was the place where naturally He was at home. Does He make the least lamentation over the Temple? It is Jerusalem He weeps over—the men of Jerusalem, the killers, the stoners. What was His place of prayer? Not the Temple, but the mountain-top. Where does He find symbols whereby to speak of what goes on

in the mind and before the face of His Father in heaven? Not in the Temple; not in its rites; not on its altars, not in its Holy of Holies; he finds them in the world and its lovely-lowly facts; on the roadside, in the field, in the vineyard, in the garden, in the house; in the family and the commonest of its affairs—the lighting of the lamp, the leavening of the meal, the neighbour's borrowing, the losing of the coin, the straying of the sheep.

All His life He was among His Father's things, either in heaven or in the world—not then only when they found Him in the Temple at Jerusalem. He is still among His Father's things, everywhere about in the world, everywhere throughout the wide universe. Whatever he laid aside to come to us, to whatever limitations, for our sake, He stooped His regal head, He dealt with the things about Him in such lordly, childlike manner as made it clear they were not strange to Him, but the things of His Father. He claimed none of them as His own, would not have had one of them His except through His Father. Only as His Father's could He enjoy them; only as coming forth from the Father, and full of the Father's thought and nature, had they to Him any existence. That the things were His Father's made them precious things to Him. He had no care for having, as men count having. All His having was in the Father.

Jesus, then, would have His parents understand that He was in His Father's world among His Father's things, where was nothing to hurt Him; He knew them all, was in the secret of them all, could use and order them as did His Father. To this same I think all we humans are destined to rise. Though so many of us now are ignorant what kind of home we need, what a home we are capable of having, we too shall inherit the earth with the Son Eternal, doing with it as we would—willing with the will of the Father. To such a home as we now inhabit, only perfected, and perfectly beheld, we are travelling —never to reach it save by the obedience that makes us the children, therefore the heirs of God.

His parents found Him in the Temple; they never really found Him until He entered the true temple—their own adoring hearts. The temple that knows not its builder, is no temple; in it dwells no divinity. But at length He comes to His own, and His own receive Him;—comes to them in the might of His mission to preach good tidings to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance, and sight, and liberty, and the Lord's own good time.

G. MACDONALD.

OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

Years of Preparation.

Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? S. Luke ii. 49.

ON this one Sunday in the year we are taught to contemplate the childhood and the youthful life of Jesus. The Word of God, our only guide in these matters, has told us but little of it. The Gospels are chiefly occupied with His ministry; with the three years during which He was teaching and working miracles amongst the people, and more especially with those last few days of bitter anguish which closed His sorrowful and toilsome life below. It was perhaps to be feared lest some superstitions might connect themselves, as with the person of His human Mother, so with the scenes and incidents of that period during which He was gathering strength in secret for the contradiction of sinners against Himself; increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. There was to be no historian of His youth; no dragging into publicity, even for the example of later times, of that long season of progress and preparation through which it pleased Him to pass humbly and patiently to the manifestation of His glory and the accomplishment of human redemption.

Nevertheless, there must be no forgetfulness on our part of the marvellous fact that our Lord Jesus Christ did spend on earth some thirty years before He wrought one miracle or held one public discourse as God's messenger or man's Redeemer. We need that fact, every one of us, for our instruction and for our admonition. The details of that period are lost to us; God's wisdom has so appointed it: but the fact that there was such a period, and the reason of it, and the principle on which it was passed through, is full of divine lessons.

I. And first we should notice the importance of this fact to a right conception of our Lord's work for us as a whole.

Some persons never speak of anything but the death of Christ. The whole of the gospel is for them the one fact of the Atonement. And that one fact rightly understood is indeed the sum and substance of the gospel. We blame no man for making much of it. It is impossible to overrate it. But to the right understanding even of the Atonement it is essential to bear in mind how and through what stages He passed to it. The sufferings of the last week, intense and incalculable as they were, formed but a small part of His whole humiliation. The death must not be detached or severed from the life. The life was first given for us, and then the death was borne for us.

When the Apostle Paul says that He who was originally in the

form of God made Himself of no reputation, or (more exactly) made Himself empty, and took upon Him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; he teaches us no doubt that there was an entire subordination in Him of the divine to the human; that He laid by and disused, for the time, the original and inalienable Deity, and submitted to every condition of growth, both mental and bodily, to which man himself is subject. We do not presume therefore to say that there was, throughout the infancy and boyhood of Jesus, a distinct and equable consciousness of the condescension to which He was submitting Himself. Yet even this rather heightens than diminishes the effect of that condescension when gazed upon in retrospect. And we do feel that, marvellous as was the patience of our Lord under calumny, insult, and torture, it was not greater, it was even less wonderful, than His patience through thirty long years of obscurity and silence.

The great step in Christ's humiliation was when He incorporated Himself in the family of man, when He deigned to begin that long series of condescensions, of which weakness and neglect and misconstruction were items, and to look forward through a long vista of dull monotonous years to a prospect marked only by reproach and pain, by a cross uplifted and an opened grave.

II. These thirty years of silent preparation had more in them than a mere condescension or humiliation. Both in what they were not, and in what they were, they contain for us all a serious and a comforting lesson.

1. What do they say to men or to women whose whole life is obscurity and monotony? Is not that the description of most lives? How many in any congregation are persons of mark and note? persons whose lot in life is one of interest, distinction, or widespread usefulness? These things may be for the few; the many toil on without observation and without success. What to these would have been the life of Christ as an encouragement or as an example, where for these His sympathy as in a life actually and personally known, if all His years had been passed in a round of public duties, if His childhood had been one of premature publicity, if in youth or early manhood He had taken to Himself the office of the Prophet of His people? The bulk of His life was spent even as yours. He too, the Creator of all things, was for all but the whole of His earthly sojourn an obscure, an unknown, an unregarded man. What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. Do thy work, however dull, however obscure, as for God, as in God's strength and by God's appointment, and it shall be marked for thee at every turn with Christ's footsteps, as much in its monotonous humility as in its occasional anxiety and distress.

2. But if these thirty years are thus full of instruction in their negative aspect—I mean, by their obscure and by their preparatory character—do they not teach also by direct example? Look back, upon your Saviour's home in Nazareth. See how He went down thither with His parents, from His visit to Jerusalem of which you have heard to-day, and was subject unto them. See how He consented to abide there, still a son, a faithful and an obedient son, long after He came to man's estate. You do not read in Him of any ambition to be independent: you do not find Him remonstrating or murmuring against the restraints of home, and beginning to remind Himself or others that the time was come for self-management and self-concern. There He continued, in that dull home, in that stagnant village, through thirty long years, until the time actually came for His showing unto Israel. Shall not the son, shall not the daughter, of a Christian home deem that good enough and great enough which a Saviour, who was also the Creator, thought happy enough and honourable enough for Him?

Let these records of His example sink down into your hearts, not to be idle there, but daily fruitful. And add yet to them this one; how amidst all the docility and all the obedience of His early home-life our Lord yet surrendered not into others' keeping the responsibilities and the sanctities of His personal being. You are taught by His example to be obedient in all things: but you are taught also to cherish the remembrance that your life can neither be lost in that of others, nor surrendered (in its deeper mysteries) into another's keeping. You yourself have a life within, and a life above, and a life beyond, which you cannot delegate to other management, nor shift to other accountability. 'Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?' was the question asked of His parents at the age of twelve years, by Him who in all things was subject to them, and in all things dutiful.

'Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?' What is that? What is it for us? Surely it is the setting forward on earth, in our own little sphere, that kingdom of God which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. DEAN VAUGHAN.

Our Father's Business.

Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? S. Luke ii. 49.

THESE, the earliest recorded words of the Lord Jesus Christ, strike the keynote of His life. The opening bud shows what the flower in full blossom will be like; the faint light of early dawn

prepares us for the brilliancy of high noontide; even so the words of the Child Saviour shadow forth the life of the Man Christ Jesus.

I. And indeed it could not be otherwise, for the speaker is He who is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!' The Child Jesus increased, it is true, in wisdom and stature, but His nature could never alter; over His character and will there could never pass the faintest shadow of change, for in Him we see what Almighty God intended man should be, and what man, in a higher, better life, undoubtedly will be—a perfect man, in the perfection of human nature. Into such a nature change can never creep; over such it can have no power.

The Saviour's life answered to the keynote struck in those early words, 'Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?' Let us see, then, what sort of life it is those words prepare us for. It is the life, now mark you well, of One who has come into the world to spend it—not in dreaming, not in prayer only, not only in suffering patiently even—but of One who has come to work, whose life is to be a busy, practical life of devotion to duty; One who thirsts not to succeed, to be applauded, to see men bowing down to Him, but to begin His work, and through life, and to death, to do it, patiently, faithfully, unflinchingly; One who is fearful of 'losing a day;' who says, 'My Father has sent Me to do His will. To do it is My meat and drink, to finish His work is to have lived!'

Here is an ideal of life! Is it ours? Here is a conception of work! Is it ours? To us work too often means toil, sorrow, labour. It is associated only with the blistered hands, and the aching back, and the throbbing head, and the weary brain. Work! To some the very sound of the word is hateful. They will tell you that they work only because they are obliged. Work is an unfortunate necessity (except to the happy few born to independence and to luxury), a legacy of sorrow left by our first parents to the human race, so that now for most people it is 'work or starve!'

II. But you cannot picture the Saviour in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, or the tired, patient Christ on His tours of mercy through Palestine, and any longer speak so of work. You cannot any longer hate or despise it. No, Christ has sanctified work for ever. And now the only life to be ashamed of, the only life to be despised, is the life of aimlessness, of idleness, frivolity, and uselessness.

All work may be consecrated to God—done in His sight, and for His approval.

There is a legend of a monk who was once praying in his cell; and as he prayed the Saviour appeared to him. Now, while he gazed in rapture on the glorious vision, a bell was rung that summoned the monk to the performance of some trifling duty. And he hesitated,

feeling that he could not tear himself away from this heavenly manifestation. But, after a few seconds, he rose, hastened away, finished his duties, and quickly returning knelt in his cell again, and to his delight found that the vision had not faded in his absence. Then the Saviour spake and said, 'Son, if thou hadst not gone, I had not tarried!'

But while in all our work we may be employed in our Father's business, there is a business—the performance of our strictly religious duties—which is specially His. This we must never neglect, never allow lightly to be put aside. It is in His house, in the grace of the Sacraments, that we receive strength and wisdom for the stern work of life which is the lot of every one. J. B. C. MURPHY.

The Child Jesus: A Pattern for Children.

(*For Children.*)

Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? S. LUKE ii. 49.

IF I were to ask you who was the only perfect man the world has ever seen, you would all reply, 'The Man Christ Jesus.' And if, again, I asked you whether we who are grown-up men and women ought to copy His example, you would say, 'Why, of course, you ought.' And if, yet once more, I were to ask, 'And you, are you also bound to imitate Him, and to be such children as He was? you would still say, I am sure, 'Yes, we are.'

But if, made bold by these answers, I were to turn upon you and say: 'Very well, then; go, and be such children as Jesus was,' I wonder how you would take that. Most of you, I suppose, would simply understand that I was bidding you be good children; for you know that He was good, and that only as you are good can you grow like Him.

I. Mark, first, that the Child Jesus was a diligent scholar. He did not 'hate' to go to school. He did not neglect His tasks, or slur them over anyhow, or think, as perhaps some of you think, that getting out of school was the best part of the whole business. We might be quite sure that He diligently attended to the wise Rabbis who asked and answered questions, who uttered so many wise and witty proverbs, and told so many pretty stories, if only because He Himself was, in after years, so wise in asking and answering questions, and spoke so many proverbs and parables which the world will never let die. But we can do more and better than merely infer what a good scholar He was. We can see Him, while He was yet a lad,

going to school of His own accord, and staying in it when He might have been climbing the hills or running through the fields with His friends. For when Joseph and Mary brought Him up all the way from Nazareth to Jerusalem, He was so charmed to listen to what the wise men of Jerusalem had to say, that He stayed on in the Temple three days after His parents had left the city. And it was not to see the beautiful courts and colonnades of the Temple, all overlaid with marble and gold, that He stayed; nor to listen to the exquisite singing of the choirs, nor to see the priests offering sacrifices on the altars: much less was it to gaze on the wonders of the streets, the markets, the bazaars. He stayed simply that He might sit at the feet, *i.e.* attend the classes, of the learned and venerable doctors of the Jerusalem schools, both asking them questions and answering the questions they asked of Him. So docile was He, and so earnest; so wise and searching were the questions He asked and the answers He gave, that 'all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.'

Here, then, was a lad who valued knowledge and wisdom so highly that He went to school of His own free will; nay, even went to school while out on a holiday; and was so engrossed by what He was learning that He let His parents start for home without Him, and hardly seems to have known that they were gone.

II. Mark, again, that this good scholar was also a good son. The Hebrew boys of our Lord's time were very well bred. They were taught good manners, as well as good morals. They were enjoined, both by their parents and their masters, to salute every one they met in the street, to say to him, 'Peace be with thee.' To break this rule of courtesy, they were told, was as wrong as to steal. And the boy Jesus was well brought up, and was full of courtesy and kindness, and good-will; for, not only did He grow in favour with men in general, but He had a large circle of kinsfolk and friends who loved Him, and were glad to have Him with them. When Joseph and Mary left Jerusalem, while He, unknown to them, tarried behind them, they were not at all anxious about Him at first; for they said, 'No doubt He is with some of our kinsfolk or acquaintance' (S. Luke ii. 44). So that we know there were many who loved Jesus for His amiable qualities and good manners, and who were charmed to have Him with them.

We know, too, that He had never grieved His parents before, in His eagerness to learn, He let them go on their way home without Him. For when they had found Him in the Temple, they were so astonished that He should have given them the pain of seeking Him sorrowfully, that they cannot blame Him as for a fault, but can only ask Him why He has treated them thus. He must indeed have been

a good son to whom His Mother could speak as Mary spoke to Jesus. Nay, even after He had become 'a son of the law,' even after He had learned in the Temple that He was the Son of God, we are told that He left the doctors from whom He had learned so much, and the Temple which He felt to be His Father's house, went down to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary, 'and was subject unto them.' He did not throw off all obedience and respect for them so soon as He was independent of them. He loved them as well as ever, and was as submissive to their will.

III. And, lastly, this good scholar and good son was a good child of God. He was always 'about His Father's business.' He felt that He must be about it, wherever He went, whatever He did—at home and at school, in the street and the synagogue, as well as in the Temple, when He worked and when He played. The one great thing He had to do, the one thing which above all others He tried to do, was to serve God His Father; not simply to become wise, and still less to please Himself, but to please God by growing wise in the knowledge and obedience of His commandments.

So that now when I say, 'Follow Christ; try to be such children as He was,' you understand that there are at least three things in which you may imitate Him. You understand, first, that you are to be diligent in your school tasks and studies, to learn as much as you can and as well as you can. You understand, secondly, that you are to honour and obey your parents—when they are absent as well as when they are present, when you grow up as well as while you are dependent on them. And you understand, thirdly, that you are to make the doing of God's will your chief 'business,' your chief aim in all you do, because He is your Father and loves you, and because you love Him for His great love to you. And if you try to love and serve Him, God will help you; and Christ Himself will say to you, 'You are my brothers and my sisters; for you also do the will of My Father who is in heaven.'

S. COX.

The Father's Business.

And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?—S. LUKE ii. 49.

THESE are the earliest recorded words of Jesus. Already we have seen Him in the manger and worshipped Him with the shepherds, we have gone with the Wise Men and laid at the feet of the Infant our treasures; we have seen Him in the Temple, and listened to the words of Simeon and of Anna, but until now we have not heard His voice. As we saw Him in the manger it was a silent Infant; now,

for the first time, the Incarnate Son speaks to us, and we hear His word. And, further, these are the only words of Jesus for the first thirty years of His life. We should very much like to break into the obscurity that gathers round those thirty years of Him who came to be the pattern of mankind, but we are not allowed. Only for a moment is the curtain raised which hides from our view the Incarnate Son of God, and this is that moment. This is the only case during the first thirty years of our Saviour's life in which we are admitted into the presence of the Eternal Son of God, and this gives to the words their infinite value: it is our one glimpse of the Incarnate Son during the early years of His life.

I. The time has come for Jesus to make His first visit to Jerusalem. It is true that He has been there before, but He was an unconscious child. Now for the first time in His conscious life is the boy going up to Jerusalem. We infer with complete confidence that this going up to Jerusalem at twelve years of age was the first visit to Jerusalem, and we can conceive with what interest He would look forward to it, and what were the feelings of the boy as for the first time He trod the courts of the Temple, as for the first time He gazed upon those mysterious sacrifices and that mysterious ritual which He Himself was so soon to put aside as something which found its accomplishment in Himself. But this we know. When Jesus got to Jerusalem, drawn by an inward attraction, He went into the theological schools. The Jewish nation had obeyed the ancient commands to teach their children, and especially at these times—the times of the feasts. Indeed, one great purpose of the feasts was to bring the whole nation under religious influences, and Jesus, drawn by an inward attraction, finds His way into the theological schools at the Temple. Evidently He had not been taken there, because His parents would then have known where to look for Him. No; the boy had found His own way into those Temple courts, and then, when He got there, we have Him listening to the teaching, and, like His Mother, we have Him asking questions. It says here, 'Hearing them, and asking them questions.'

The two ought to go together. Before a man asks a question he ought to listen. Jesus did that. First hearing them, He then questioned them, and they were astonished at His questions. There is often something very wonderful about a child's question—there is often a wonderful directness about it which looks straight into a thing and asks straightforwardly about it. Jesus asks questions, and then they question Him, and He gives answers. They were astonished at His questions and answers. Already the boy of twelve has begun His work as the Teacher of the world. But meanwhile His parents have left Jerusalem. There has been some mistake which we cannot unravel. They have left Jerusalem thinking He is in the company.

At the first encampment they go to look for Him, and make the terrible discovery that the Child is left behind. They retrace their steps, the boy is not there. His mother says, 'We have sought Thee sorrowing.' One can well conceive their terrible sorrow. They go back to Jerusalem. They would naturally go at once to His friends and relatives. They did not find Him. The boy was lost! They spent a whole day searching for Him. Jerusalem was not a large place, but a day's search was in vain. How terrible must have been the mother's feelings! Would she ever find Him? We can well believe that the mother felt quite sure that the boy was safe. She would know that the very angels would guard this Hope of Israel. But perhaps He was lost to her, and perhaps it would be others who would now have the charge of this wonderful Child. However, on the third day, led by some reason to the Temple courts, they found Him, and now we have the answer of Jesus to Mary's slight complaint: 'Why was it that ye sought Me? Do you not know that I could not help Myself? Do you not know that I must needs be about My Father's business?' Now note here an important lesson. We have spoken of the sacred boy as having a human mind, a mind capable of learning and of growing in wisdom. Now notice carefully that underneath the human consciousness of Jesus was another consciousness—a consciousness that He was the Son of God, a consciousness that He stood in unique and peculiar relationship to God—that God was His Father. Now the Jews hardly knew that. We know it. God is our Father. But in the days of Jesus that was not known. It was, indeed, a great part of the work of Jesus to announce the Fatherhood of God, and that men are the children of God. But it is evident that the boy means something more than this. What He meant when He talked about 'My Father' we must explain by what He taught in years to come publicly. It was a great feature of the teaching of Christ that He was in a unique sense the Son of God. Twenty years afterwards, when Jesus was a man, He taught very plainly that He differed from all other men in this—that He was the only begotten Son of God. That boy of twelve knows that He stands in a unique relation to God as the Son of God. He talks about 'My Father'; He does not say, 'Our Father.' There is no one else in the world who can speak of God as his Father in the sense in which that boy can. Here I learn this great truth that Jesus, underneath His human consciousness, underneath His human thought and mind, capable of human development, had a Divine consciousness; He knew that He stood to God in a peculiar relation as the Son of God.

II. This knowledge of His relationship to God coloured His entire thought about the things of God and about His environment,

how the Temple is His Father's house, theology is His Father's business. Notice how the boy's knowledge of God has coloured His entire thought. All boys take an interest more or less in their father's business. To this boy of twelve the very Temple and the teachings of the Temple, and the teachings of theology, are His Father's business. Notice, further, that the boy cannot help being after His Father's business. Many boys like to help their fathers in their business if they can; Jesus can do no other. He says, 'I must.' That word is very emphatic. Our English Bible does not reproduce the emphasis, 'I must needs.' He wants to impress the fact that there is a sort of compulsion that rests upon Him. He says, 'Why do you wonder at My being here? I cannot help it. God in heaven is My Father, and I have no choice. I must be after My Father's business.' Now notice what follows. He went away with His parents, and He became subject to them. This is very wonderful. The boy is conscious of His unique relationship to God in heaven, and yet He is Mary's son as well as the Son of God. He obeys His earthly parents. That is very wonderful; He accepts the earthly relationship. Although He is conscious of a heavenly relationship, this in no wise lessens His deep consciousness of His earthly relationship. We do not wonder after all this that His growth in wisdom went on, and His growth in favour with God and men.

You and I are sons of God. We used to have earthly parents, and to-day we have earthly relationships, but we are sons of God—not in the same sense as Jesus, but in a very real sense. It is your privilege and mine, as we walk about in the world, to know that this world is the property of 'my Father in heaven.' It is our privilege, as we look up to the sun shining in the sky, or to the bright stars at night, to know that 'my Father' made all those. It is our privilege, underneath all thoughts and relationships, to know that you and I stand in a very definite and real relation to God. If we are conscious of that it will colour our entire view of life. Henceforth, the kingdom of God to us will be 'our Father's business.' We shall take an interest in it; we shall take an interest in Church matters, because they are 'our Father's business;' we shall take an interest in the matters, not only of our own church, but of every church, because they are all 'our Father's business.' Nay, we shall take an interest in all the affairs of life—whatever pertains to man will become dear to us, because it will be 'our Father's business,' and we shall help it forward. Wherever we are we shall be after 'our Father's business,' and whether it be in the mart or the exchange, or in the quietude of the home, or wherever we may be, we shall ever have our Master's business, 'our Father's business,' before us. But mark, amid all this we shall yet remember our earthly relationships. We may imitate Jesus

there. It is a very poor excuse for not obeying our earthly father to know that we have a Father in heaven. It is a very poor excuse for not caring for our own children to know that we are children of a Father in heaven. If we have a right view of God, we shall have a right view of all earthly relationships; they will be all sacred, they will be all lifted up. J. AGAR BEET.

The Person of Christ.

Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.
S. Luke ii. 52.

I. EVERY one is willing to accept the human example of our Lord, to listen with reverence to His moral teaching, to point with loving admiration to His patient self-sacrifice, and we fancy that by encouraging such feelings we shall be helping to unite Christians and to bring unbelievers into the Church. It is not that men, for the most part, disbelieve in the divinity of Christ, but they relegate this truth to the background, and dwell in thought almost exclusively on His manhood. Indeed it is an infinite mystery, a tremendous problem to face—the dwelling of the Infinite, the Eternal, within the confines of space and time, the union of the Almighty, the All-Holy with the weak and sin-stained nature of man. And in their impatience with the difficulty, men have taken up one or other of the lines of error that branch off from the truth of the Incarnation. Either, they have said, Christ's humanity is absorbed and lost in His divine nature, or God was in Christ only as He is in all good men, but the union was more close and less hindered by sin by virtue of the pure will of the Man Christ Jesus. Those who have been attracted by the simplicity of this latter theory have pointed to such passages as my text in proof of His conformity to the ordinary conditions of human life. He was, they say, like us; He had to grow in grace, to increase in wisdom as in stature, He must learn obedience, He was ignorant of truths which the Father hath put in His own power; He was, in short, man, with all the weakness as well as all the capacities of man's nature. And they ask, How is this inconsistent with His continuous and conscious divinity, how could God become Man after this manner? Now, let us look at the form in which the Church has stated the truth of the Incarnation. Christ is one Person in whom two natures are united. Whatever that may mean, it cannot be like the indwelling of God in any ordinary man, for that is a relation between two persons, while in the Incarnation there is but one Person

in two natures. Again, it is not that a man became filled with divine inspiration, like a prophet or seer, for the Church declares that from the very moment of His birth our Lord was both God and man. God the Word, the divine Person, who is from all eternity the Son, took to Himself the nature of man and became man. Where, then, is the divine in Him? In what does it consist? If He seems so human to our eyes, how is the Godhead hidden from us?

II. We shall gain some light on this if we look at our inmost natures. Every one must have thought of the marvellous union in himself of the changeful with the unchanging. Man comes into the world, and lives, and grows, and passes through numberless varied conditions; his mind expands as he changes from childhood to manhood, where he was ignorant he gains knowledge, in what he was weak he becomes strong; and yet the man himself, the inner essential being that makes him what he is, is there throughout, unchanged amid all the changing conditions of his life. What is this permanent element in man? It is his personality, that which unites and holds together all that he is, and does, and knows, and thinks, and makes it his and no other man's. This abiding centre of personality gives unity to the longest and most varied life, and survives even the eclipse of consciousness itself. And it is in this element, in the unbroken continuous personality of Christ, that we are to behold the divinity, the Godhead of our Lord. With this idea to guide us, we can understand how, amid the inconceivable change from the life of glory to the life of humiliation, divested, as He willed to be, of all the majesty which was His, He yet had the abiding consciousness of His divine personality which could not be laid by. 'I and My Father are one.' 'Before Abraham was I am.' 'Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.' In such sayings as these the divine personality asserts itself, stretching from out the form of a servant and the condition of humiliation, back into its native eternity, up to the Father's home.

III. There is one attribute or accompaniment of humanity which we cannot associate with the person of Christ. When the apostolic writer is emphasising the perfect sympathy of our High Priest with us, in that He was tempted in all points like as we are, he is careful to add, though the addition is hardly called for by the subject in hand, 'yet without sin,' *χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας*, 'apart from sin.' The self-limitation of the divine nature could not involve any stain of sin, for that would be more than a limitation, it would be a contradiction of the nature of God. We can conceive God giving up His power, His knowledge, limiting Himself in time and in space, but that He should 'deny Himself,' and renounce the holiness which is His essential nature,—this is inconceivable. Therefore we hold that Christ not

only did not sin, but *could* not sin. He could not will to sin without ceasing to be God, for the very nature and essence of deity is holiness, antagonism to sin. And in this incapacity for sin He throws a fresh and glorious light on human nature, and shows us for what it was designed, and to what it shall attain. For in Him and in His sinlessness are revealed the possibilities of redeemed and regenerated man, the ideal humanity; and, that we may rise from this, from Him we gain not a mere example, but strength and life by the grace which flows from Him through all those whom He unites to Him as His members. It is not by bringing Christ down to our level so as to make Him an example easier for us to follow that we are saved, but by the victory of that human will over sin, by His unbroken union with the Father, by the spotless purity of the sacrifice which He offered, by the obedience which He learnt, by the sacramental life which we derive from being in Him, the 'Captain of our salvation made perfect through sufferings.' A. T. LYTTELTON.

IV. OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS.

A Manly Religion.

Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you. ISAIAH li. 1, 2.

THERE are few things more desirable for all of us than a manly religion: a religion, I mean, which is no mere sentiment; which may enlist but does not rest upon feeling; which can use music or poetry, and awaken and employ the æsthetic sentiment, but depends upon something far deeper, and is the possessor of moral backbone. So to appropriate the great facts of revelation as to make them of force for restraining in times of temptation, and stimulating in hours of lethargy, and comforting and brightening when the dark clouds come, so as to build up a vigorous character, true, brave, humble, strong, and Christ-like—this is to have a manly religion.

I. This result so needed depends upon the habit of referring in life to fixed subjects of reference. Principle at all times is like a guide-post on an untravelled track, like a compass in an unvisited sea, like a mountain-peak piercing the clouds to act as a landmark in an unknown country. Principle is unchanging fundamental truth, which, amidst the many fluctuations of temporary facts, the vicissitudes of varying circumstances, is always applicable and can never

alter. But there are whole classes of facts supplied by the past, a reference to which provides us with forms of principles. To live at random, if we have anything that can be called a religion at all, is to have a religion pleasing in the sunshine, useless in the storm. To live by habitual reference to truths of final importance, and from these more and more to be gathering principles into ourselves, is, so far forth, to have a manly religion.

II. In the mind of the prophet, any men who have a serious sense of life; any who have at all awakened to the pathetic fact that the journey of our probation can be trodden by each of us once and no more; any, consequently, who are at all alive to the seriousness of opportunity—which may be used, which may be lost; any who are at all quickened into a sense of responsibility, must acknowledge that the chief business of a wise and practical man is to 'follow after righteousness,' to 'seek to know the Lord.'

'Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.'

Look unto the Catholic Church. Ye are the children of the Church; ye are members of that Body of the Lord.

The Church! she has had a strange and chequered life. She has made great mistakes, she has had terrible quarrels in her family, for is she not human as well as divine? But in spite of mistakes and notwithstanding quarrels, her great work has gone on.

Three things expressly and unflinchingly she has insisted upon to her children. 'Put God first,' she has ever said. Make Him your first beginning and your last end, the object of thought and affection, the governing principle of life. And then, 'Take to heart the really greatest trouble, the one and chief calamity. Not poverty; it may become a blessing. Not sickness; it may discipline the soul and ennoble the character. Not failure of hopes or loss of friends; even these, though full of sorrow, may lift man to higher things. But sin —the wilful resistance to the will of the All-Holy; sin, with its energetic and terrible consequences; sin, carrying always with it some form of death; sin, which no man can undo, which has needed so mysterious a transaction in the eternal world as the sacrifice of the Son of God;—sin—this is the master evil; settle it in your hearts that it is.' And then she has added, 'With God before you and sin gripping you, you need a Saviour; and One is come. Learn, then, the common-sense religion taught you by the Catholic Church; learn how to use your Saviour. Your attitude must be one of earnestness and penitence. Realise your place in the family; use your privileges; be faithful in prayer, diligent in the using of sacraments. Being a sinner, a sinner with a Saviour, learn the power of penitence; be often upon your knees.'

OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

The greatness and holiness of God; the seriousness of sin; the tenderness of a Saviour's love, and the power of faith and penitence in using the gifts of the Saviour;—these things amidst all the vicissitudes of her changeful history have been kept before the minds of men by the Christian Church. In the course of your life's journey, oh! let these things never be forgotten. 'Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you.'

III. Note three closing forms of advice which arise from the subject before us.

1. Learn, I beseech you, to value the science of goodness, as the most valuable subject for study and attainment that can possibly be placed before any man.

2. And, again, let it never be forgotten that, to gain this proficiency, you need, and you must resort to, the great Teacher. You will want the strength of Christ.

3. And, lastly, if it be so, take care that your moral response to His assistance be clear and complete. Rising above the depressing influences which are around us all, strive to live, to breathe in the atmosphere created by Him. Learn some measure of self-sacrifice. Live a loving life. 'See that ye love one another.' 'For love is of God; and he that loveth dwelleth in God, and knoweth God; for God is Love.'

W. J. KNOX LITTLE.

The Warfare of the Saints.

Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?

ISAIAH li. 9, 10.

THE principle of the warfare that is suggested by the text is the same that is taught in the New Testament; for there is a marvellous continuity in Scripture. Those who study it devotionally are almost startled to see the same grand principles underlying the entire volume. It is exactly the principle of the fifth chapter of the First Epistle of S. John. 'Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' Faith is the gift of God. It is bestowed by God the Holy Ghost. It is promised to us as one of our baptismal blessings. The idea of faith runs not merely through the Bible, but through the entire Prayer Book. The habit,

however, of faith requires, like every other habit, to be thoroughly formed. If a man never exercises his body, he will lose all strength of muscle. If a man never exercises his mind, he may be grand on the river and in the cricket-field, but he will be an idiot so far as the deeper treasures of science are concerned. If a man concentrates all his strength in developing his intellect or his body, and ignores the means by which God wills that the higher part of his body should be quickened and strengthened and nourished, he will be intensely clever, intensely subtle. What he has sown he will reap. He will contribute to the stores of knowledge, by which the literature or the science of the country is to be aggrandised; but he will gradually lose the power of communion with God—the power of realising the invisible. Faith must be strengthened. The habit of faith must be formed, like every other habit alike in the natural and in the spiritual world. We must in this, as in everything else, be fellow-workers with God.

I. Now God desires that our faith should, first of all, be centred on the Lord Jesus Christ—as Man to be with us, as God to help us. Then afterwards we are led on from knowing Jesus as very Man and very God, to knowing the Father, not merely in a vague, general way, but so as to say, 'Abba! our Father,' and to know God the Holy Ghost as dwelling in the temples of our hearts. So, in regard to this great battle that we have to fight against the world, we find that the first revelation is that the Lord Jesus Christ, by His death, has delivered us from the power of this world—that though the world appears to be very subtle and overmastering in its force, we have been set free from it by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ faced the world. Christ let it do its worst with Him. He met it, as a man, with the self-same power that God has given to you and to me. He allowed it do its very worst. He 'broke the yoke of His burden, and the staff of His shoulder, the rod of His oppressor, as in the day of Midian.' Just as Israel in the wilderness had her own special temptation that they might be disturbed by dark dreams —that they might seem in the night watches to hear the sound of the taskmasters with their bitter cursings; just as they might almost feel the lash falling on the naked back as they groaned in spirit under the recollection of that dreary bondage, but knew that Pharaoh was powerless to touch them because they had been redeemed—because the power of Egypt had been broken, because God had set His captive people free, because the waters had overwhelmed the Egyptians, so, in like manner, we appeal to our God, to the Christ, the conquering King in whom we have believed.

II. Then, secondly, the Lord Jesus Christ does not merely set us an example as a man. He is very God, and the God in whom we

have been baptized. We may have been selling our birthright, like Esau, for a mess of this world's pottage. We may have trampled under foot the blood of the everlasting covenant. But God has redeemed us, and baptized us into Jesus Christ, and made us partakers of a divine nature; and now, by every means of grace, but above all, by that Holy Communion, when with the outward sign of bread and the wine, He gives His own very life into our weak and our tempted nature, God has not merely set us an example, but joined us to Himself, and poured His own life into our hearts; so that we can appeal to Him, and say, 'O Christ, who dwelleth in me, O Holy Spirit, who hast made my very body the temple in which thou art tabernacled, awake! awake! Fight for me! There is none other that fighteth for us. Awake! awake! O arm of the Lord! Art thou not He that hath wounded Rahab, and cut the dragon in pieces?'

III. But do we cry, 'I am so weak'? Then Christ bids us remember that the same life and the same power has been poured into men and into women as weak and as helpless as ourselves. He bids us go back to Moses, despising the treasures of Egypt, and preferring to choose affliction with the people of God. He bids us think of holy Stephen, with the paving stones rattling round him, strong because he was looking up to that invisible King. He bids us remember S. Paul, and S. Peter, and Polycarp, and Cyprian, and all the glorious army of the martyrs; and of the holy men and women whom we ourselves have known, who are living in the world and yet above the world—who did all that was good and kindly and lovely and of good report—who kept their eye ever looking through the open door into the invisible kingdom of Christ their Lord.

We are fighting under an invisible, but a most mighty Leader. We are fighting, as it were, in the mist; and ofttimes the form of the great General is hidden from us. The mist breaks; we catch for a moment just a sight of that glorious white raiment of the all-conquering King, and then the mist gathers round again. We listen in some quiet hour, and we just hear the sound of the great leader's voice—'Awake! awake! On, on to victory! Charge, men, charge!' and we arise, God helping us. Then the night-breeze rises, and the echo dies away, and we hear nothing but the sound of a flattering or a sneering world, and our heart sinks within us, and the Christ seems to have vanished. He allows you to suffer a while here, as He suffered on that cruel cross, because He is proud of His soldiers; and He does not mind their being long nights in the trenches that He may better their hardihood, and make them soldiers not merely for a review, but for a real battle. He is proud of the soldiers of the cross, and He desires to show the angels and the archangels the

magnificent army that He will have trained by the invisible might of God, the blessed Spirit; and therefore He allows us to suffer, and allows us to be tried and tempted.

This is the victory that overcomes the world: our confidence that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that we belong to Him, and that He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

BISHOP WILKINSON.

Missions in the Light of the Redeemer's Work.

He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. ISAIAH liii. 11.

THE remark has been made by a Christian writer that missionary sermons are not uncommonly preached from Old Testament texts; and it is no wonder that it should be thus, for when we wish to glance afar off, and see the distant landscape, it is natural that we should go to the top of the highest hill we can find in the neighbourhood; and just so, when we want to take a wide view of God, and the purposes of God towards mankind, it is natural that we should seek those great mountain ranges, if I may so speak, that are called the prophecies of Isaiah and of others, and among which there are some peaks which tower above all the rest, as some high mountain in the Alps; for instance, that fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, that has been called, as you know, the Fifth Gospel. Those prophecies look forward from the time they were spoken to our own times, to the millennial times, and to the everlasting days.

We will consider in succession, first, the travail of the Redeemer's soul; then the certainty of His seeing the fruit of the travail of His soul; and, in the third place, His being satisfied therein, concluding with a word of practical application.

I. First, the travail of the Redeemer's soul. But before we speak of the travail of His soul, we might well pause, if we dared, and inquire what was that soul itself that thus travailed. The soul of the Man Christ Jesus, the living bond between that body, begotten of the Holy Ghost, that had no taint of sin, and that spirit that from the first breath that He drew upon earth to the last, was ever in full fellowship with God. What was the Redeemer's soul? Who can tell? Who can tell how deep, how strong, how sensitive? A soul beside which the highest, purest, the most refined we have ever known, or can conceive of, is but grossness and vulgarity and impurity; that soul of Christ ever at war with sin, liable to temptation, tempted in all things and truly tempted. He did not go through any make-believe conflict with sin, but while tempted in all things never gave way to the temptation; no, not in a word, not in a thought,

not in a desire. That soul of Jesus travailed. It is an old word, a word from the French language, that we have kept in common use, travail, meaning labour, that which costs pain and effort. He travailed, He worked, and suffered.

II. And, when the precious blood had fallen, was it lost? Was it as waters that are poured upon the ground, and cannot be gathered up again? Did He suffer for nought? Rather might we believe that a good seed falling into good ground bears no fruit; rather might we believe that the broad and mighty river will not rush to the ocean waiting to receive it, than believe that Christ can have laboured and suffered for nought, and that the travail of His soul can have been in vain. He is sure to see the fruit of it; He has begun to see it; He began to see it at the very hour when He rose from the dead; He is seeing it now; but He shall see it on a larger scale, and with a fuller scope when the day comes, and the words of the prophet shall be fulfilled: 'He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied.' 'He *shall* see,' it is the expression of a fact; it is an absolute certainty, for, lo, He says Himself to the Father, that He shall lose none of them that are given to Him, and not only we sinners are the gift of the Father to the Son, but we are the very object of the prayer of Christ, we are the answer of the Father to the Son, 'Ask, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.' He who taught us that whosoever asketh receiveth, Himself heard the word from the Father: 'Ask and I shall give Thee;' and, when we ask that the uttermost parts of the earth shall be given to our Lord, we are simply praying His prayer; we are carrying it on, we are uniting with Him in it, and that is the true meaning of praying in the name of Christ, and we are sure to be heard by Him who heareth Christ always. As the Father's gift is the Father's answer to Christ's prayer, as the purchase of Christ's blood, surely the travail of His soul shall not be in vain.

III. And in that travail of His soul He shall be satisfied. But, oh, what a word is this 'satisfied.' Who is satisfied in this world? What mind is satisfied? What heart is satisfied? Christ shall be satisfied. What does it take to satisfy such a heart as the heart of Christ? He shall be satisfied in the full glory of His Father's grace; He shall be satisfied in the salvation of man; He shall be satisfied because His love shall have had full scope, shall have found its response, because His sufferings shall have borne their fruit; He shall be satisfied because the victory shall be achieved, because He shall at last rest in His love, because He will joy with exceeding great joy, a joy the brighter for the bitterness of the anguish, a rest the sweeter for the weariness and the toil; a triumph the more

glorious for the sharpness of the conflict. Then, indeed, those words that we apply to ourselves may well be applied, and shall be applied to Him, and He shall reckon that the sufferings of this time that He has been on earth are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall then be revealed. Do not think that He accomplished His work through the travail of His soul, to dispense us from having anything to do and to suffer in His cause. He opened the way that we might follow Him. We have yet to learn what the Apostle meant when he said that he filled up what remained of the sufferings of Christ for His body which is the Church. We have much of outward working, much of organisation, much of speaking and hearing, much of publishing and reading, but, I fear, very little of that travail of the soul, of that bearing of the souls of men upon our hearts in love, in tears, in prayer before God. The power of His resurrection we love to speak of; but the power of the resurrection leads on to the fellowship of His sufferings, and the day must come, if we are truly consecrated to God, and if we will give ourselves up to His service, when consecration will be spelt 'crucifixion.' T. MONOD.

The Universal Burden and its Bearer.

The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. ISAIAH liii. 6.

THE Ethiopian statesman asked, 'Of whom speaketh the prophet this?' One at least of his suppositions has been gravely adopted, and 'some other man' been suggested as pointed at by the prophet. It has also been maintained that we have here an ideal picture of the righteous Israel in its relation to the rest of the world and to God. But I suppose that these solutions would generally be admitted to be failures, and that the wonderful picture of the suffering servant of God in this great chapter would generally be recognised as a portrait of an individual. If it be that, there is only one Individual in history of whom it is a likeness. The life and death of Jesus Christ—lived and died five hundred years after the very latest date to which any one has assigned this prophecy—fit it feature by feature, tint by tint, as nothing else can. And the minute external correspondences between the prophet's vision and the gospel story, important as these literal resemblances are, are mainly important as pointing onwards to the complete correspondence between the spirit and functions of the suffering servant of the prophecy and of the Jesus Christ of the gospel history.

I. Consider first, the universal burden.

The fact that every man is a transgressor of the law of God is the

prime fact of humanity, and the all-important truth needed for the apprehension of the very rudiments of the gospel. We shall never know what we need, nor be able to understand what Christianity, as gathered in Christ—who is Christianity—offers to do for us, unless our eyes are opened and our consciences made sensitive to the unwelcome but undeniable truth, that we all 'have sinned and come short of the glory of God.'

What we think about sin will settle all our religious ideas. If we pooh-pooh it, then we shall not want a Saviour. A man that will say wise things to us will serve our turn. If we rightly understand how heavy the burden is, and how impotent we are to get rid of it, then we shall not be ready to believe in the doctrine of every man his own redeemer, but we shall want, not merely a Saviour that talks to us, however wise and sweet and tender may be His words, or a Saviour that walks before us an embodied realisation of the ideal humanity, but we shall want a Saviour that does something for us, and puts out of the way, somehow or other, that black load under which we are staggering. The appeal to the understanding is less powerful to bring men to a perception of Christ's redeeming work than that to the conscience.

II. Look at the one bearer of the burden.

'The Lord hath made to light upon Him the iniquity of us all.' Observe that, in the compass of three verses of this chapter, there are seven distinct, emphatic, and harmonious utterances, all bearing on the one thought of the vicarious suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(1) 'He hath borne our griefs.' (2) 'And carried our sorrows.' (3) 'He was wounded for our transgressions.' (4) 'He was bruised for our iniquities.' (5) 'The chastisement of our peace was upon Him.' (6) 'With His stripes we are healed.' And they are all gathered together in the final word of my text, 'The Lord hath made to light upon Him the iniquity of us all.'

I venture to say that if these words, in the variety of their metaphor and the fulness of their description, do not teach the gospel that Jesus Christ bore in His sufferings the sins of the whole world, and bore them away, language has no meaning. Nothing could be more emphatic, nothing more reiterated, full, and confident than this sevenfold presentation of the great truth that He lived and suffered and died for us because He suffered and died instead of us.

Although my text speaks of that burden as being laid upon Him by the Lord, we are not to suppose that, therefore, it was not assumed by Him by His own loving volition. He bore our sins because He would. The Lord laid them upon Him; therefore

the sacrifice appointed by God is accepted of God; but He chose to suffer, and He willed to die, because He loved every soul of sinful men. There is the secret of the power of the gospel. A Christianity without a Christ whose death is the world's light and life is a Christianity without power.

III. Mark the men that are freed from the burden.

'He hath made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all.' Yes! and yet is it possible for a man included in the 'all' to have to stagger along through life under his burden, and to carry it with him when he goes hence? 'Be not deceived, God is not mocked,' says the foremost preacher of the doctrine that Christ's death takes away sin. 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Every man shall bear his own burden.' So your sins, taken away as they are by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, may yet cling to you and crush you. There is only one way by which the possibilities open to all men by the death of Jesus Christ may become the actual experience of every man, or of any man—and that is, the simple laying your burden, by your own act of quiet trust, upon the shoulders of Him that is mighty to save. A. MACLAREN.

The Agony of the Cross, and the Satisfaction of Christ.

He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. ISAIAH liii. 11.

THESE words connect all that is solemn in time with all that is glorious in eternity. They reveal to us the awful truth of Christ's keen and full consciousness of His agony, and the equally awful yet inspiring truth of Christ's perfect satisfaction with its issues. That agony in all its sinless sufficiency and atonement; that travail of the great soul of the Saviour; that cross and passion, accepted and endured by Him, is the message which the Church of Christ is charged to deliver throughout all time. The results of that message upon the world she is commissioned to evangelise speed on to the birthday of Christ's glory, and endure, for weal or woe, throughout all eternity. Thus this simple sentence is a summary of Christ's sorrow and of Christ's joy; His travail and His triumph; and therefore of the ages in which each is manifested, here and hereafter. Of His passion here, God says, 'He shall see of the travail of His soul;' of the result of that passion hereafter, God says, 'He shall be satisfied.' So solemn are the sentences surrounding this Messianic prediction, that reason is overpowered by reverence. We take it for granted that these words can be applied to Christ, and to Christ alone.

I. And yet there is a sense in which they may be used by those

who do not suffer and shall not enjoy as Christ suffered or enjoyed. Many a one with partial truth may say, 'I shall see of the travail of my soul, and shall be satisfied.'

For instance, a man is endowed with a high order of intellect. His lot is cast in an uncongenial sphere. He resolves, God helping him, to labour incessantly for the profession of his choice. His means are limited, his friends few, his prospects dreary; yet by simplicity of life and by prayerful application he toils silently and steadily onward and upwards; leaves—it has happened ere now—the mill, the bench, the counting-house, the office, or the mart; and wins the worker's laurels—position, fame, honour. As he looks back upon the hours he has stolen from sleep or from recreation, and the privations he has endured; as he sees that by perseverance and toil he has made the best of life, he can say, 'I have seen of the travail of my soul, and I am satisfied.' So, too, in the higher as in the humbler levels of life. Many a workman who has become a master; many an apprentice who is now a large or even a limited employer; many an assistant who now engages assistants by the score, and whose name is worth thousands wherever it appears, remembers the time when anxieties fevered his brain, reduced his strength, and made him feel that the victory was scarcely worth the fighting. Yet, so soon as it was won, he too said, 'I have seen of the travail of my soul, and am satisfied.'

II. And now let us try to gather the meaning of the prophet from another point of view. Let me ask you to look back upon dark Gethsemane, with its horrors and prayers, its prostration and tragedies; upon the court-house and the prætorium, the mockeries and miseries of each. As we behold the world's shame and sin, we learn a little of what the prophet calls 'the travail' of Christ's soul. We cannot fail to be impressed by what Isaiah's prediction implies—I mean the keenness of Christ's consciousness, the full knowledge He possessed of His agony, His mastery of all the minute and miserable details of His passion. This sorrowful survey of the Saviour we must never forget, just because the infinite vastness of Christ's sorrow is the measure of His infinite satisfaction; the richness of Christ's reward shall fully compensate for the bitterness of His experience.

'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.' The soul shielded from sin's future penalty craves emacipation from sin's present power. The spiritual apprehension of deliverance cannot co-exist with subservience to sin's dominion. If it be dominant, deliverance, though effected, has not been apprehended. If deliverance be apprehended, sin cannot be dominant. 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for

His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' 'Sin shall not have dominion over you.' But sin had dominion, and the soul obeyed. 'Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey?' And this obedience was rendered and exacted mainly because sin was stronger than the man. But the Deliverer comes. He makes the man stronger than his sin, by the infusion of resurrection-life. Thus believers are saved from the power of sin.

Yet they desire a loftier rescue. For it we await the hour when we 'shall see the King in His beauty,' then He will save us from the sorest trial God's child has here to bear—I mean the presence of sin. The travail of Jesus, then, as including His work in its entirety, has effected a triple deliverance. We are delivered from sin's penalty: the deliverance is present and complete. We are delivered from sin's power: the deliverance is present, but incomplete. We are delivered from sin's presence: the deliverance is future and complete. It shall satisfy the Saviour by whom it was achieved.

Christ shall be satisfied. Christ, the master of the preacher, the pastor, the visitor, and the teacher; Christ the Lord, so loving and forbearing; Christ the object of the lonely Christian's hope, joy, and service—He shall be satisfied. Be that a comfort to the troubled, a help on the way to the pilgrim, an assurance of victory and of triumph to many a fainting standard-bearer. Let it be a star shining through the gloom of the spiritual storm, when the ship is tossed on the billows of sin, of antagonism, of unbelief. Let it assure your soul, as you look to the unrest of religion and of politics on the Continent and throughout the globe. Let it inspire your weary spirit when far away heathenism and savagery seem to defy the sacramental hosts of the Church of the living God. Above all, let not impatience for the dawn of Christ's bright day betray you into distrust of His power, or lead you to limit His love. Remember He has said, 'I shall be satisfied'—satisfied that sin is no longer a barrier between the King of Heaven and His subjects on earth; satisfied that He has given joy to the sorrowful, comfort to the afflicted, companionship to the obscure, the desolate, and the forlorn; satisfied that by His cross He has ennobled souls depraved by sin, softened hearts once hard adamant, invigorated wills weakened by frequent failure; satisfied that He and He alone has given a heavenly home to the homeless, immortal glory for everlasting shame, that those who have found Him never leave Him; satisfied that His people are satisfied, since He responds to the deepest necessities of their souls; yea, satisfied that His infinite travail is rewarded by the innumerable host who in Him are justified, through Him are sanctified, and with Him shall be glorified. DEAN LEFROY.

OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

The Teaching Unction and Common Knowledge.

And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord. Isa. liv. 13.
But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye have no need that any man teach you. 1 S. John ii. 27.

IN the writings of all the Apostles, as well as in the anticipations of evangelical prophets, this place of the Spirit as instructor and guide of the elect individual is ungrudgingly recognised. James speaks of a wisdom that comes to every believing suppliant direct from the Father of lights. Paul speaks of an enlightenment and revelation that are gifts of the Spirit, and says that 'no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost.' And John speaks of 'the anointing of the Holy One,' through which all doubts may be resolved, and the lowly disciple made safe against current sophistry and error. Peter asserts that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. Such testimony coming from leading and honoured Apostles has a peculiar emphasis and impressiveness about it. They were quite content that the Church official should be abased and even superseded, so that the work of the teaching Spirit should be magnified. In appealing every truth to the tests present in the souls of those anointed with the Holy Ghost, John and his fellow-labourers were laying foundations of steadfast catholic harmony and unwavering light.

I. It is *not for a religion of mere natural intuitionalism* that John here pleads. The spirit of man has been degraded by evil, warped by prejudice and mistaken training, distracted and torn in opposite directions by the fickle and contradictory movements of a flesh inflated with egotisms and bubbling self-sufficiencies. It must undergo some radical transformation before it can become the test of what is true. One might as well call in a boiler-riveter organically deaf with the din of his occupation to settle conflicting criticisms respecting a quarter tone in music, or some spirit-drinker with burnt-up tongue and palate to do the work of an accomplished tea-taster, as appeal subtle spiritual questions to such a court as that. It is true that God's voice speaks in the conscience of an unregenerate man; but till the conscience is enthroned supreme over the whole nature, we can have no assurance that one of the baser passions is not personating conscience and masquerading in its royal attire. It is only after the Spirit has come to possess the nature of a man, and to make the undefiled conscience rule the life, that the nature can become in any sense a test of religious truth. The heart of man must be disengaged from its old embarrassments and distractions, redeemed from the bias

of its passion and wilfulness, chastened into docility and meekness and humility, quickened, purified, exalted, before it can discern. It is this specific anointing with the Spirit which confers upon the conscience its new prerogative as a competent judge of truth. When that unction descends upon men, it brings with it the discernment of spirits, and guards against the perils and deceits of intellectual temptation. All things needful to the welfare and progress of the divine life are thus brought within the range of knowledge.

II. If we accept this idea of the common knowledge possessed by believers in Christ who receive the promised Spirit, *what will be our attitude towards the Bible, the Church, the Christian teacher, and all those forms of religious authority so jealously upheld* in the past? Does not this idea of common knowledge introduce a competing authority, and bid fair to prove a solvent of ecclesiastical rule and prerogative, and produce a new confusion of tongues? The Churches of the Reformation rightly make *the Bible a test of faith*, and bring all teaching to the tribunal of its impartial balances. The New Testament is mainly a statement of historical facts from the lips or pens of eye-witnesses, to which there can be no addition by subsequent revelation. In so far as it is a statement of the doctrinal interpretations identified with those facts, it furnishes a permanent record of what was taught by the Spirit to the first generation of believers, and of what was approved and attested in their own experiences by those representatives of the early Churches who received the component parts of the New Testament into the canon. It gives absolutely trustworthy notes of the work of the Spirit in saving and instructing and sanctifying men, just as a book like White's *Natural History of Selborne* mirrors the processes of nature, the movements of birds, and the succession of the seasons in an English village for a generation; and the record is good for what is taking place to-day. The unchanging Spirit is not likely to contradict Himself now, and teach divergent doctrines to a docile recipient of His ministries; and the Church whose members are inwardly led to the acceptance of the truths which accord with the original standards of the Bible proves itself so far a recipient of the same inspiration. The Bible is a gauge of the degrees of spiritual illumination present in the early Church, and, whilst intended of course to instruct us in the truth, is intended to instruct us first of all about ourselves. It is the scale by which we are to measure our own inspiration and spiritual insight; but it will not do our seeing for us, and each man must perceive for himself and acquire by the use of his spiritual senses this common knowledge.

III. But does not all this make a recognised ministry of teaching and administration in the Church an impertinence and a hurtful

superfluity? By a statement of this purport was not John cutting the ground from under his own feet and the feet of those associated with him in the oversight of Christ's flock? If there was 'no need that any should teach,' why, forsooth, must he burden his tottering years with the task of writing this and similar letters? why appoint teachers in the Churches of Asia Minor to disseminate the faith and to interpret its meaning? Is it not a barren task for us to support an official ministry to-day? and would it not be well for us to copy those communities which preserve an evangelical leaven by common testimony and exhortation?

An official ministry may not be necessary to determine what truth is for the ideal Church, consisting of men and women who have recovered the divine image and been made anew in knowledge and true holiness, and yet it may have functions of the highest possible importance to fulfil. The ministry may at least do what Jesse did for David when the prophet Samuel stood in the household at Bethlehem with his horn of anointing oil for the head of the elect king. It may go and fetch the absent and half-forgotten youth from his common tasks at the sheepfold, and place him at the feet of the anointing prophet. It may remind men of an anointing they have slighted and may soon come to finally forfeit. Many a recipient of this anointing is now and again found in a position like that of the Levite named in the Book of Judges, who had wandered northward to Dan, and who was ministering before an image of silver, although a scion of the priestly tribe. Many a man upon whom descends a Spirit of light and life has wandered from the sanctuary in which he ought to be standing, and is prostituting to falsehood and vanity the gift he had received; and the messenger of the Church may go to him in his far-off wandering and debasement, and remind him of the light-bringing unctions and baptisms of the past. A voice may be needed to bring to remembrance the fact that you once had clear, settled, life-moulding, and life-controlling views; but you have dishonoured the gift conferred in happier days, and all is dimness and abasement now. You may need a hand to lead you back in penitence and shame to the feet of the great Prophet and Priest, so that you may seek His forgiveness and ask again the old illuminations.

An official ministry, moreover, may gather up the voices of many hearts into one common confession of faith before God. It may act the part of the conductor at a musical festival, who, if he cannot put himself in place of the many voices and instruments of the performers, or make a shrill instrument soft, can at least by eye and hand marshal into one the many strains and voices present there. The teacher may be the channel for concentrating into a united expression the beliefs and conviction of the many. He may sometimes be able

to syllable those spiritual discernments which many are unable at first to utter for themselves. But he is a teacher—one appointed to guide and stimulate men in the less mature stages of their knowledge, and those with whom he deals must spring at length into complete equality of inward knowledge and perception. The presence of the teacher must never be looked upon as an excuse from the obligation to grow. A time comes to every member of the Christian Church when it may be said to him, as to the believers addressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'For the time ye ought to have been teachers.'

IV. Wherever the tendency to fall back upon external authority in matters of faith appears, it is a sign of ominous spiritual degeneration. It means there is something in us which makes the presence of the Spirit unwelcome, and repels that presence from our hearts. If we were reconciled to God and in harmony with His will, we should leap to embrace this high honour of being directly taught by God Himself.

The effect of this anointing is to confirm us in our union with Christ. 'But as His anointing teacheth you concerning all things, ye abide in Him.' The gift is permanent in its efficacy, and it guards us in an enduring relationship. It comes from Christ, and it shows the secret of its origin by taking us back to Him. The teacher of earthly things finds at last, often with more or less pain, that his pupil has grown into separation and independence, for the difference in the attainments of the two has become less and less with each succeeding year of study. That can never take place between the Teacher of heavenly things and the soul He indoctrinates with holy mysteries; for these mysteries are inexhaustible in their number and range, and the disparity of knowledge between the two can never be effaced. He has infinite stores of light and wisdom for us, and the man who is most fully taught is most deeply sensible, not only of a present, but of an endless indebtedness to Christ and the Spirit of Christ. He has no teaching to seek outside Him in whom all wisdom and knowledge are hidden, no new rules of life and conduct to test and discover, no new mediations to invoke, no new satisfactions to receive, no new forms of power to find in the world. The teaching of the steadfast Guide binds the disciple to Christ, in whom he must ever abide.

T. G. SELBY.

OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

The Gift of the Son.

Afterwards he sent unto them his son. S. Matthew xxii. 37.

I. E have been celebrating the feast of Christ's Nativity, and as we consider the vastness, the complexity, the contradictions, the earnest expectations of the world, much is gained by the thought that from the first it was the purpose of God to gather up all things in the Son of His love, which helps us to feel a little more what the Incarnation is, what it promises, what it enforces, what it inspires. It sets before us, with invincible majesty, the fact, which is ever escaping us, of Christ's power to subdue even all things unto Himself. In any case, simultaneously with the Fall, was revealed the 'afterward' of man's redemption. Man stood before his Maker, as every soul among us has also stood in its time—his innocence lost, his condition ruined, his will weakened, if not broken, his Eden forfeited, his soul corrupted, as with swift poison, by the alien influx of evil; he stood there with only the fig-leaves to cover his shame, after trying vainly to hide himself from the presence of his God; he stood there trembling and horror-stricken before that awful consuming purity which he once had loved; he stood there and heard his doom. But was it doom only? Nay, it was promise too. 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.'

II. How did that promise swell and widen like the broadening flood in Ezekiel's vision! How did that promise brighten like 'the day-star from on high!' The pulse of light glowed in the world's history from grey to rose, from rose to crimson, from crimson to the burning gold of day. First, the promise to Abraham that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed; then in age after age to Patriarch, to Jacob, to David, until at last the prophets had learnt to see in Christ 'the Rose of Sharon,' the Sceptre of Jacob, the Star of Israel, the Prince upon His throne, the King in His beauty, the Divine Sufferer, but not for Himself, who 'bore our sins and carried our sorrows,' He who should be a covert from the storm and a shelter from the heat, a shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

The ages of the old dispensation constituted what the fathers called the evangelic preparation. It is admirably summed up in the first verse of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'God, having from old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets, in many parts and in many

methods, hath at the end of the days spoken unto us in a Son, who by the effulgence of His glory and the image of His substance, when He had made purification for sin, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.' In many parts God had spoken to the fathers of our age, not revealing Himself, but lifting the veil fold after fold, until He sent His Son to be at that first Christmastide our Redeemer, and breathed His spirit into all upright hearts and pure at the first Pentecost. Even now we know but in part and prophesy in part. We await the full revelation of the dazzling future. In many parts God had revealed Himself fragmentarily and multifariously, in many methods, by law and prophet, by promise and threatening, by type and allegory, by vision and open vision, by seers, and warriors, and kings—now by a Gentile sorcerer like Balaam, now by a rough ascetic like Elijah, now by a polished priest like Ezra, now by a humble gatherer of sycamore fruits like Amos. God does not do all things all at once. His methods are complex. He is patient because He is eternal. We, in our impatient ignorance, are constantly crying, 'How long, O Lord, how long?' His answer to us is, 'Though the vision tarry, wait for it—it will surely come; in your patience ye shall acquire possession of your souls.'

III. The ultimate meaning of all the Divine drama was that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. But for this repentance itself would be unavailing—we should be condemned to the horror of eternal sin, a sin without a Saviour, a wrath without an intercessor, a sickness without a balm in Gilead, and with no physician there. But forgiveness is the infinite boon of God's 'afterward,' and it was purchased for us on the condition of repentance by the precious blood of Christ, and holy Scripture seems almost to strain the capabilities of language to express the plenitude, the absoluteness of this divine forgiveness.

It almost seems as if Scripture had exhausted the power of metaphor in the effort to convince us of the efficacy, the openness, the completeness of this Divine 'afterward' of God's forgiveness. Again and again the Apostles of Christ assure us that we need no longer be 'sold under sin,' or be, as we are, the slaves of sin; but that our sins may be pardoned, covered, forgiven, cleansed, washed out, put away from us, scattered as a cloud, and annihilated, made as though they had never been. Take these two metaphors of S. Paul. He tells us of the long terrible accounts of debts and transactions recorded against us—recorded against every one of us in the book of God—blotted out by the bleeding hand of Christ passed over it. Take that other yet more striking metaphor of his—the handwriting against us, which is contrary to us, torn asunder, and the cancelled fragments of it nailed to the Cross of Christ. Or go back again, even to that ancient

word-painting of the prophets in Isaiah, in Micah, in Job, which tells us of God taking our sins, putting them into a bag, sealing them up and flinging them behind Him, and sinking them in the depths of the sea.

Let our repentance be sincere. Let us not only repent of our sins, but forsake them. Then for us is all this graciousness of God's eternal 'afterward,' and all this plenitude of an inexhaustible promise; and then through the wicket-gate of repentance lies the golden land of God's forgiveness. ARCHDEACON FARRAR.

VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

Sacrifice. Romans xii. 1. Whatever is dearest to us upon earth is our Isaac: happy are we if we can sacrifice it to God (Gen. xxii.).

More sacrifices originate in ostentation than in generosity.

Have you ever thought that as the Lord Jesus Christ looks upon the cup of cold water as given to Him (S. Matt. x. 42), so He will look upon the wounded feelings, the repulsed confidence, as given to Him also?

Almsgiving, prayer, and fasting are the three special Christian sacrifices; the first, out of our estates; the second, of our souls; the third, from our bodies, which are the three principal parts of a man every one, therefore, being obliged to pay its tribute of acknowledgment to the Creator.

Humility. Romans xii. 3. In the way of God we begin by fear and advance to courage; for just as in the way of the world adversity is the parent of fortitude, so in that of the Lord boldness ends in debility, fear in strength (Prov. ix. 10).

Lowliness is the base of every virtue, and he who goes the lowest builds the safest.

He who quietly follows his duty, receiving silently praise and blame, honour and dishonour, is truly humble, although his neighbours think it not.

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He that is truly humble never thinks himself wronged.

Humility of the Faithful. Romans xii. 3.

When the Church of Lyons was fearfully persecuted in the second century, the sufferers, after excruciating tortures, were cast into narrow and foul dungeons, in which many were suffocated, and all the weaker ones died of privation, yet, when addressed as martyrs, they declined the title, saying it did not yet belong to them, but appertained first to Christ, the faithful and true witness (martyr), and secondly to those whom He had finally sealed by enabling them actually to endure the death agony for the gospel. As to themselves, they said: 'We are but confessors, poor and lowly,' and they entreated, with tears, that continual prayers might be offered on their behalf.

Importance of Humility. Romans xii. 3.

Humility is the beauty of grace. Be clothed with humility. The Greek word imports that humility is the ribbon or string that ties together all those precious pearls, the rest of the graces. If this string break, they are all scattered.

Humility preserves all Virtues. Romans xii. 3.

Humility is not only a precious grace, but the preserver of all other graces; and without it (if that could be) they are but as a box of precious powder, carried in the wind without a cover, in danger of being scattered and blown away.

Humility and Spiritual Distinction. Romans xii. 3.

Such persons amongst us as have been distinguished with the most extraordinary discoveries, had commonly nowise appeared with the assuming, self-conceited, and self-sufficient airs of enthusiasts, but exceedingly the contrary. They are eminent for a spirit of meekness, modesty, self-diffidence, and a low opinion of themselves. No persons appear so sensible of their need of instruction, and so eager to receive it as some of them; nor so ready to think others better than themselves.

Humility towards all. Romans xii. 3.

It is recorded of S. Francis de Sales, by one who was intimately acquainted with him, that he treated every one, even the most insignificant person who approached him, as though he himself were the inferior, never repulsing any one, never refusing to enter into conversation or listen; never betraying the slightest sign of impatience, weariness, or annoyance, however importunate or ill-timed the interruption was.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Humility wins Love. ROMANS xii. 3.

THE editor of Samuel Rutherfurd's famous letters says of him: 'He had many things which commended him to the people of God; but his covering his great attainments with the veil of humility did render him peculiarly dear to them. It was plain to all who were but a little acquainted with him that in all his most eminent appearances for God he studied to disappear, lest he should, by standing up, be guilty of intercepting any part of the glory which belongs to Him alone. His growing downward in that high grace of humility made him, however, grow upward in favour with God and all good men.'

True Humility. ROMANS xii. 3.

MR. HERVEY, being in company with a person who was paying him some compliments on account of his writings, replied, laying his hand on his breast, 'O sir, you would not strike the sparks of applause if you knew how much corrupt tinder I have within.'

Humility and Kindness. ROMANS xii. 3.

ONE of the most remarkable and almost unique forms in which George Moore displayed his benevolence was in marrying people who were not, but who ought to have been, married. This was effected through the city missionaries, who found multitudes of men and women living together. The women were in a disreputable social position. The children were growing up illegitimate. George Moore paid their marriage fees for thousands of these persons. It was all done privately. The clergyman knew not the donor of the fees, and the people knew not who was their benefactor. The matter was kept a secret until after Mr. Moore's death.

Humility and Success. ROMANS xii. 3.

WHEN the recent military expedition went to Lower Egypt, it was found that only the smallest boats could go great distances up the Nile. There are some truths that are only revealed to those who grow in lowliness and self-forgetfulness: secret teachings which are reserved for those who are intensely childlike in spirit. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.'

The Development of Jesus. S. LUKE ii. 39, 40.

OBSERVE the scrupulous fidelity to the law of Him who came not to destroy, but to fulfil it. His parents returned to Nazareth only after having fulfilled every prescription of the law.

The Divine Growth. S. LUKE ii. 39, 40.

'HE grew'=physically. 'He waxed strong, being filled with wisdom'=spiritual, intellectual, and religious development=on the one hand, the knowledge of God; on the other, a penetrating knowledge of men and things from a

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Divine point of view = the true humanity of Jesus; = the normal growth of man, physically and morally, accomplished for the first time on earth. God's idea of man realised in Jesus. Then He regarded this Child with perfect satisfaction.

Isaiah liii. 6. Dora Greenwell beautifully says, 'Belief in that one great doctrine of the Atonement is to me like the blue flower of the German legends; long sought and hidden, but when found, admitting into every guarded treasure, which, without the possession of it would have been closed up.'

Father. 'Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.'

I would ask you to notice further, that, at each step, there is an opportunity of finding God, and these opportunities are limited. 'Seek ye the Lord while He may be found;' and when we have 'found' Him, in any degree, those opportunities are enlarged. 'Call ye upon Him while He is near.' We are to expect answers to prayer as we give up outward sin, which it is easy to do, and inward sin, which is far more difficult. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.' And then we are to go back to early things—things of our childhood—when God was more than He is now to us. 'Let him return,'—absolutely and simply—to 'the Lord'—and then to that 'Lord' appropriated, that is, the abundance —'to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.'

I wish to make one or two remarks on these points in the history of a man's restoration, or change. And I say change or restoration, for we are very poor judges of what is a change. We often call that a conversion, which, if we knew all, we should only think a taking up of things dropped long ago, and after a deep lapse, for the true conversion occurred years before.

Let us look now at some way-marks of the road, a road which it becomes us to study now. It pleases God almost invariably to place all the best things—truth, peace, holiness, Christ—just so far off that they must be 'sought,' and yet just so 'near' that we are sure to 'find' them if only we try. You must 'seek.'

It is just so at this moment. For anything your soul can want, you must think it is 'near.' But what is 'near'? What is nearness? Is God always 'near'? What is the difference between God 'near,' and God 'far off'? The Holy Ghost in the heart. The Holy Ghost makes nearness. He unites us to God. That presence of the Holy Ghost in the soul is nearness. He is God in us. It all depends upon the present work of the Holy Ghost in our hearts. It comes and goes,—it varies in intensity. And this is the reason why, for all practical purposes, God is sometimes nearer than others. If the Holy Ghost were to leave you, you would never find God,—the life in the spirit would be over. It does not date from a man's birth, and it may terminate long before his death. So long as you feel any desire to 'seek' God, the Holy Ghost is there; but if the Holy Ghost were to go, you could not 'find' God. There would be a crisis.

The time to 'seek' and the time to 'find,' is a distinct period in a

man's life. I assume that now you are 'seeking.' Therefore, what you do is now, but how long that may last, no one can tell. If the Holy Ghost were to retire, no power upon earth could enable you to 'find' God. Hence the tremendous emphasis of the words—'Seek ye the Lord while He may be found.'

But very little 'seeking' will, I do not say bring God 'near,' for He is never far off, it will make you conscious that He is 'near' to you. When that comes, seize your advantage, for that may pass away!

Now, in a measure, you have 'found' God. While you have that sense of nearness, however small, pray, pray in a different way from that in which you have been praying for a long time. Pray as one who can touch God,—who can look up in His face. Pray as you never did before. Pray importunately. 'Call, call ye upon Him.' This is the golden opportunity for prayer. It is a crisis. He is near. He is ready. He waits. He is nearer to you than the nearest. How long that will last, I do not know. 'Call ye upon Him while He is near.'

For such a prayer as that will surely give you instinctively some conviction of sin. You will either find out sins you did not know, or you will feel sin much more acutely than you did before. You must immediately act out that conscience. It is the first act of the restoring Spirit. Everything depends upon how you treat Him in His office of Reprover. You will see a sin: it is true it is deep-rooted,—it is what the world wouldn't call a sin, everybody does it; but to your conscience it is a sin. You must give it up. It must go. You must give it no quarter. Cost what it may, it must go. You must treat it as a thing you hate and despise. You have not yet, perhaps, a motive for condemning it,—you have not the highest motive,—you have not the love of God in your heart. But it is the hinge of your conversion. Let it be like a dead and buried thing. It made you forsake God, and you must forsake it. If you love it in any degree,—farewell love! farewell heaven! Those two things cannot agree. 'The Lamb of God' not only 'takes away' the punishment due to 'the sin of the world,' but He is a Saviour from sin.

'Let the wicked' (is there any one here who says, 'I am not wicked'?—if you do, you have never been taught of God), 'let the wicked forsake his way.' Go deeper, deeper than the 'way.' What has been your failing? What is it that has led you on to your sin? 'Thoughts,'—thoughts of covetousness,—thoughts of evil,—wicked pictures of the mind. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.'

You ask how? By prayer,—by occupation,—by filling the mind with what is good,—by having more of the Holy Spirit,—by new

and better pleasures,—higher objects,—worthier influences,—more fixed motives:—by 'thoughts,' loving thoughts, constant thoughts of Jesus,—this leads on to the end.

Now you are returned,—you have met God,—you are in converse with God,—you live with God,—God has watched over you, and brought you to this point. God has been drawing you so long,—you meet God,—you 'return to the Lord,'—not to peace, not to pardon, not to obedience, not to a new life,—but to a Person, an actual Person,—'to the Lord,'—to the same One you knew and now love more:—you 'return to the Lord' of all power, an absolute, irresponsible Sovereign, the Governor of the universe, the Arbiter of the destinies of every man.

And now you have met the Lord, what will you do? You can only say, 'Have mercy upon me.' He will look tenderly on you, He will deal with you, not according to your thoughts,—He will be kinder,—(you never imagined there could be such pity and such love in the universe,)—He will be more gentle than any fellow-creature, He will see good in you that you dared not think was in you,—'He will have mercy.'

And why? why? Oh! wonder of wonders, the Lord is our God —He has taken our nature,—He is our Brother,—He has Himself paid all the debt,—He has engaged Himself to us in everything. Therefore, 'return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.'

Poor soul, it is what you want, and what you have. Your sins are legion—His promises are as the stars that cannot be numbered. The stains of your youth and your past life are very deep; but that blood 'cleanseth from all sin.' Your guilt has 'abounded,' your sin has 'abounded:'—'but grace hath much more abounded.' Grace and sovereignty. 'Return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.'

And then, oh, the peace! Condemnation gone,—freed from sin,—judgment over,—heaven sure,—Jesus mine! If you say, 'It is too good, too wonderful.' It is. But, 'My thoughts are not your thoughts; neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.'

But what is the conclusion of all this? There are crises in life,—crises of seeking,—crises of finding,—crises of praying,—crises of returning,—crises of mercy,—crises of pardon,—crises of heaven. 'Seek ye the Lord'—*now*,—*now*,—'while He may be found.' Whatever conviction you have in your soul, follow it *now*. Whatever account you have to settle with God, settle it *now*. Whatever you have in your heart to do for God, do it *now*.

There are two *nows* in the Bible which ought never to be separated. One stands out in the brightest rays, the other retires into the

deepest shadow: '*Now* is the accepted time;' '*Now* they are hid from thine eyes.' JAMES VAUGHAN.

Right Proportions of Truth.

Let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith. ROMANS xii. 6.

IF we are to take faith here, in the common sense of the word, as the trust which a man has in his heart towards God, then the passage will mean, that 'if any man prophesy,' or preach, 'he must do it according to the insight into invisible things,'—or, which is very much the same thing,—'according to the spiritual experience which God has given him.' We can only do anything up to our faith. The measure of the faith is the measure of the life: and if we wish to raise the standard of our life, we must begin by elevating our faith. We cannot go beyond our faith; for if we did, it would be wrong. And we must not fall short of it.

The great business of life—to me, in my ministry, and to you, in your daily conversation,—is to square our words and actions to the faith which God has given us.

But I do not believe that this is the only, or the chief intention of the words we are going to consider. Rather, we are to take faith, here, as signifying not the belief, but the things believed—our creed. As when we say, 'the Christian faith'—as in the Ephesians: 'There is one Lord, *one faith*, one baptism;' or, in St. Jude, 'The *faith* once delivered to the saints.'

And the Apostolic command, then, is this: 'When any one expounds truth, or declares truth, let him take care that he places everything in its right order and degree, as God has given to us. Each doctrine and precept occupying its proper place: not trespassing upon another, neither falling short of, nor exceeding its relative importance and bearing on the whole scheme of revelation.'

What we have to do is to keep the general symmetry and harmony of the whole body of 'the truth as it is in Jesus.' 'If any man prophesy, let him prophesy according to the proportion of faith.'

There is no greater danger than disproportion. Almost all error that has come into the world is from disproportionate truth. For the enemy of truth is too wise to present to the mind what is palpably false. It would at once startle and offend! But he can secure his end much better, because much more insidiously and unconsciously, by putting before us that which is in itself perfectly true, but which becomes false, because it is not balanced and corrected by another and equal truth.

God has been pleased to give us a revelation: and, without that

revelation we could know nothing—spiritual and divine—as it really is. But God has also given us common sense, intelligence, discrimination, mental powers, capable of becoming very great, if only we will exercise them. The intellect will be a very poor guide, and will always go astray without the revelation: and the revelation, to be revelation indeed, must enlist and command our reason. The intellect must exercise itself upon the revelation; and the revelation must guide the intellect.

But let us see further, as respects revelation itself. The Bible was never intended to be taken piecemeal, and to be cut up into isolated texts. No book would bear it. The Bible will not bear it. It is given us as a whole, and as a whole we must receive it. 'Let the word of God'—not a part, but the whole word of God—'let the word of God dwell in you richly.'

If you take single sentences, or even single lines of thought, you may prove anything. You may prove Socinianism. You may prove Popery. You may prove anything. There are sentences—and strings of sentences—in the Bible, which, taken alone, would overthrow the Trinity. There are sentences—strings of sentences—which would establish the grossest absurdities of materialism, and the wildest enthusiasm. There is not a heresy which has not beautiful things to be said for it, and strong arguments for it in Scripture, if you only insulate the Scripture, by picking and choosing the passages you like.

What we have to do is to know all; to collate all; to take large comprehensive views; and to gather, from the Bible, in its integrity, the mind of God. The danger of separating off particular verses, or partial, or arbitrary doctrines, is immense. It is a very fascinating thing to do; and it always has a great intention, and is so pleasing to human nature that it is almost a temptation. But it is unworthy the author, and sure to make us narrow, and fanatical, and untrue!

Let me instance one or two things in which it is most important to take the Bible in its completeness, and to keep 'the proportion of faith.'

Each Person in the Blessed Trinity has His own prerogative, His own office, and His own dispensation. Some persons' religion is all of the Father, as a Creator and Governor, with very little reference to the work of the Son, or the Spirit. Some persons' religion is all of the Son—His finished work; His indwelling; His love and preciousness; and the Father is put far off in the background, and the Spirit is very subordinate.

Some make all their religion consist in having a Divine Spirit in them, with little regard to the Father or to Christ.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

At this moment, and with many of us, the tendency is to make Christ everything, to the overshadowing and disparagement of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is, I do not say omitted or forgotten, but certainly much less in their thoughts and words than Jesus Christ. And yet we are under the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, the Saviour has given his Church to the Holy Ghost. He has told us that His going away was for our benefit, because He leaves with us the Holy Ghost. He has instructed us exactly what the Holy Ghost is to do; how we are to deal with the Holy Ghost.

Nevertheless, let any one say, in the teaching of the day, Does the Father—still less, does the Holy Ghost, occupy His equal part? Are the Three Persons honoured each 'according to the proportion of faith'?

It is a very delicate thing I am going to touch, and it is a very solemn thing to appear to say a word which should lessen the 'proportion' of Christ in any one's thoughts. God forbid that we should do it! To that dear Saviour we owe everything. All that makes life worth the living, in all worlds, was purchased by His Cross. He is our righteousness,—our peace,—our joy,—our life,—our hope,—our all. Who can love Him enough? Who can speak of Him enough? Who can think of Him enough? Holy Jesus! forbid it that Thy servant should say anything which should make Thee less by the shadow of a thought in any poor sinner's heart! Rather would I exalt that dear Name of Thine, higher and higher, and make it lovelier and lovelier to every soul! It is not to diminish Christ that I speak; but it is to elevate the Holy Ghost. And I believe and am sure that this is after the mind of Christ. If Christ were here to-day, I am certain that He would say, 'Magnify the Father! Magnify the Holy Ghost!' Did He not always say it when He was upon earth?

See, then, the work of the Son and the work of the Spirit as they stand related to each other in the 'proportion of faith.'

The Son wrought out for us a complete salvation,—paid all the debt; cancelled all the guilt; and worked out for us a perfect righteousness. It is a finished work. It requires and admits no addition. We are only to accept it, and we are saved, pardoned, accepted, *safe*. 'Believe, and thou shalt live.'

With that same Christ, we then have union. He is in us, and we are in Him. That union is our strength and our life. Sever it, and we perish! God sees us in Him; and in Him we have sonship, heaven, and all the promises.

That union once made, the Holy Spirit flows into us, as the blood flows into a member of the body; or as the sap flows into a branch grafted into the tree. By that Holy Spirit, we derive new impulses;

we receive divine affections; we take the mind of Jesus; we love; we serve; we pray; we work; we are happy; we are holy; we grow heavenly, and meetened for the presence of God in His glory.

But still it is the union with Christ which does it, for, without that union with Christ, we should not have had the Holy Ghost.

So our sanctification goes on. But after all, even our sanctification is incomplete, because of the sin which dwells within us, and which weakens and defiles everything we ever touch, or say or do. Therefore, even the sanctified soul wants perfecting. And Christ perfects it. His blood washes the purest, and His righteousness covers the sanctified.

So, justified by Jesus, sanctified by the Holy Ghost, our sanctification itself justified, and clothed at last in Jesus, and knowing at the end, as at the beginning, only Jesus: and accepted in Jesus, we go to heaven,—not of our right, but of the Father's mercy, and the Son's work, and the Holy Spirit's grace: given by the Father to the Son, and committed by the Son to the Spirit, and given back by the Spirit to the Father;—that so we may be restored, perfect, in a wonderful chain of mystic love, of which it is impossible to say to which we owe the most;—to the Father's electing favour, or the Son's atoning blood; or to the Spirit's transforming power: all infinite; all unspeakable; and each 'in the proportion of faith.'

According to this method, and if this be 'the proportion of faith,' there is a wide distinction between the process of our justification and our sanctification.

We are justified *at once*, and perfectly, and for ever, by a single act of faith, if we only accept it. We are sanctified *by degrees*, through faith indeed, both in Christ and in the Spirit; but slowly, and with effort, and even painfulness. It is not the Christ that is in us, and to whom we are united, who gives the victory over sin,—except indirectly, as we owe the Holy Ghost to that union with Christ. The Christ in us is the assurance of final success. It is the earnest of victory. It is the present peace of the soul, resting in its pardon. It is the motive of everything. But the conquest of sin and evil is no sudden result of the will by an act of faith in Christ; but it is a part of the Holy Ghost. We owe it to the Holy Ghost. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost in us has not destroyed the old nature. It is there, as strong as ever, even in the regenerate. But it is kept down. It is being imperceptibly changed into what is good. Still, the conflict between the two powers of good and evil is continuous and severe to the very gate of heaven! All life is, to every believer, one long campaign. Else, why the armour? Why the constant exhortations to perseverance and courage? Why all the images of a fight, and a race and a siege? Why the repeated

promises of help? Why the 'rest' held out at last, so sweetly? Why the judgment-day?

You are free and responsible agents still. You have to strive and exert yourself to the very uttermost. 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'

It all depends on you, as if there were no God. And if it is all done, you are nothing,—God is everything. God began it,—God carried it on,—God completed it.

How then does a believer stand in respect of sin,—sin, commonly so called? It is not dominant; it does not sit on the throne of his heart, as once it used to do. But it is there. It is not the king that rules; but it is the rebel that breaks out. It is not the habit. It is not a constant presence. 'He that is born of God' is not always doing, or wishing to do it. It is not his characteristic—he 'sinneth not.' Nevertheless, 'if he says he has no sin, he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him.'

For sin, as God sees sin, is everywhere. Everything comes short. Every prayer has its wandering; every day has its waste; every motive has its alloy; every good act has its self-satisfaction; every brother has something against us, for our want of love and influence; everything is stained! And even the curbed and crushed sin will break out sometimes. Every day, every hour, and every minute, I must wash in the blood of Christ. 'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet;' but that very negation tells us, 'I must wash my feet every day.'

Where, then, is perfection? I only know three perfections: an undivided heart really given to God; a soul clothed in the perfections of Christ; and heaven.

Therefore, in your system of theology, do not take texts; but the whole Bible. Put together all the New Testament till you drink in its spirit, and gather the mind of God. See that each Person in the Trinity has His own equal part and honour, and His own proper, peculiar office, as God has revealed it.

Let all be *grace* from foundation to topstone. But recognise yourself, as you are, a free, moral agent, responsible for your state,—a fellow-worker with God,—who will have to give account before God's judgment-seat for your whole life.

Love, dearly love, election. But always reckon yourself a perfectly free moral agent.

Do not make sacraments nothing, but do not make them everything.

Do not make preaching everything; do not think it nothing.

Pardon and perfection in Christ; peace, and holiness progressive, in the Holy Ghost; rest in the Father; all given, but all to effort; all happy, but all in conflict, hard conflict, for a little while; all

humiliation, but all to the praise and glory of God's grace for ever and ever.

In everything, be sure of your proportions. See that your proportions are right. True to the whole world; true to the testimony of the saints; true to your own experience; true to common sense, for, immediately that you lose proportions, you distort truth, and your religion becomes unreal. JAMES VAUGHAN.

An Exit of Joy, and a Conduct of Peace.

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace. ISAIAH lv. 12.

ALL the promises of the Bible—even the promises of the New Testament—are Jewish. Gentiles only come into them with a second intention: 'to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.' And this is the way we come into them: Jesus Christ was Abraham's seed; we are united to Christ, and Christ is in us, therefore Abraham's seed is in us, therefore we are entitled to Jewish promises. The whole of the New Testament, especially the Epistle to the Hebrews, shows us that we are to take in a spiritual sense, to ourselves, what belonged to the Jews both in an historical and in a spiritual sense. This is the Jew's advantage. They have a double property in every promise.

This is one of these promises. To the Jew, in Isaiah's time, it doubtless bore reference to three things: the return from the seventy years' captivity; their ultimate restoration, first to their own land, and then to Christ; and God's way of dealing with each individual's own soul. To us, it stands only in the last reference; the two others may throw light upon this one, and may be its allegories, but to us the words are simply spiritual; and as such, we are about to look at them. 'Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace.'

The 'going out' appears to me to relate to that great moral exodus, when a man emerges from a state of nature into a state of grace,—from bondage to liberty,—from darkness to light,—from the world to Christ. This indeed is to be 'with joy.'

The 'being led forth' denotes the further experiences of the Christian,—God's conduct of him by the way,—his future courses, and especially the manner in which he is brought out at last,—out of this life into a better; and all this is to be with 'peace': 'Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace.'

This, then, is God's intention for His people: an exit of joy, and a conduct of peace.

It does not matter that some do not find it so; nay, that very few do find it so; that is their own fault. God meant it, and therefore God promised it,—an exit of joy, and a conduct of peace.

In this divine arrangement, you will notice that joy goes before peace, because peace is higher,—at least in this world; love—joy—peace. Peace is joy made deeper, stabler, humbler.

Let us examine, separately, the two points. No doubt, when a man's heart is first becoming right with God, when he feels that he begins to escape from his selfishness and his sins, he passes through a great deal of sorrow; but that is before he 'goes out.' When he really 'goes out' from two things,—from self-indulgence, and self-dependence,—he is sure to have joy.

Perhaps you have not 'gone out.' You are conscious of sin,—you hate sin,—you wish to be a Christian,—you are making efforts to be a Christian,—you pray,—you strive,—but you have not 'gone out,' —your thoughts live in self;—you have not cast yourself yet absolutely upon Christ,—you have not put away all idea of merit,—you have not buried the past in the grave of Jesus,—you have not shut the door behind you;—therefore you have no joy; the joy is in the act of 'going out.'

What makes joy? Liberty,—love,—pleasure,—hope.

Liberty. Everything leaps when it is first let loose. 'My soul is free. I am free from the past,—free from the trammels of a guilty retrospect,—free from a burdened conscience. I am free in the present,—in communion with my Father,—in the power of the Spirit, in victory over my besetting sin. I am free to the future,—to rise to the height of my ambition,—to soar with unlimited desires.'

Love. 'God loves me, and I love Him. I know the first, because He hath made me to feel the second. Fear has passed away. It is all love.'

Pleasure. 'Everything is a pleasure to me now, because I find Christ in everything, and everything in Christ. Love makes it all pleasant. My religious duties are become pleasant. Tasks are pleasant. Crosses are pleasant.'

Hope. 'To-day is happy, because to-morrow is happier. Is not every to-morrow undertaken for? And a very few more to-morrows, and then rest. And heaven is coming nearer every day, heaven with all its saints,—that blessed fellowship;—and Christ will soon be here, —and I shall be with Him,—and I shall see Him,—and I shall be like Him,—for ever and ever.'

But what is 'joy'? Novelty of perception,—keenness of perception,—sweetness of perception.

Novelty of perception. It is a wonderfully new feeling when a soul first tastes the promises, and grasps its own interest in Christ. What a world of thought, unguessed before, bursts upon its view! What new faculties are given to entertain, what new ideas! What floods of light! What impulses! How much is there, then, in every verse of

Scripture! How much in every fold of Providence! How much in every leaf of nature! I do not wonder at the young Christian's first strong joy. It is a feeling that will never quite return, because these things can never be quite new again. But it is graciously given just as he wants it. He has been accustomed to excitement,—perhaps the excitement of the world,—perhaps the excitement of sin;—and he wants the compensating of those joyous days of the first discoveries of truth and Christ. And as with the eunuch, joy for a while leads the way,—while, with the eunuch, he may be going into desert places, and perhaps to cruel persecutions,—he finds, as the eunuch found, that the joy in Christ outweighs it all, therefore he goes on his first way rejoicing.

And keenness of perception. Keen is the first sense of sin to a penitent, and keen is the first sense of pardon to a believer. After-life may dull—will dull—must dull some of the senses; but a man's maiden thoughts of Jesus are tender and exquisite ones. In that early dawn, the soul's atmosphere is so clear, that every object stands out in its distinctness. And you know, all things are what they are to us according to perception, and it is an amazing thing to have a keen perception of spiritual things.

And sweetness. Sweeter are those perceptions than they are keen. Are they not the touches of the Holy Ghost? Are they not all about beautiful things,—saints, and angels, a holy heaven, and a perfect Jesus? Is not it all free, boundless love, and that love to me?

So the result. The novelty of perception,—the keenness of perception,—the sweetness of perception,—of liberty, love, pleasure, hope,—fulfil the promise, 'You shall go out with joy.'

'And be led forth with peace.' Perhaps in those early joys there was too much of self, and the Good Trainer saw that they needed reducing. Perhaps, in those early joys, there was too much of ecstasy; they unfitted for daily duties; and the Good Trainer saw that they needed to be toned down. Perhaps, good as they were, they would not have been good for us always; they are rather heaven than earth,—they are things to be waited for a while; and therefore a taste was just given at the outset, to help us to wait for them at the end.

As we go on in the spiritual life, the sense of sin certainly grows deeper and deeper; and a deep sense of weakness, nothingness, and guilt, combining with a fuller sense of pardon and love, makes joy peace. It is not that the joy is less, so much as the joy is more compounded; and the better composition we call peace. Peace rests on facts, joy ranges and soars among the future; and every day a believer lives, he is able, more and more, to read two books, or to rest upon two foundations: what God has said, and what God has

done. The young convert has the first, in common with the most advanced saint; but the last is the growing privilege of a religious life. So the peace deepens as the life goes on. It is astonishing how, to a mind led and taught of God, all the changes and chances of life lend themselves to peace. Are they not all experiences of God, and is not this peace, to know God?

A great affliction is a deep fountain of peace; the very agitation hushes, and it makes all trouble afterwards so very small. A great delight is best for this, for the peace into which it afterwards sinks down.

Another and another promise fulfilled every day is always enlarging the rock underneath our feet. Another and another pardoned sin is always making the soul to lie more quietly. Another and another answer to prayer is always strengthening the arguments for the future. Another and another new drop of the knowledge of Christ is always swelling the tide, till the 'peace flows like a river,' because we see 'the righteousness' of Christ 'as the waves of the sea.'

And so peace leads on, holding while it leads, but it is a beautiful holding. 'The peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps your hearts and minds.' On and on, holding as it leads,—leading as it holds;—further and further; further from the troubled things we once called pleasures;—further and further from the refuges of lies we once thought hiding-places;—further and further up the hill,—from hope to faith, from faith to confidence, from confidence to assurance, from assurance to rest; further and further,—nearer and nearer, to the unchangeable,—to all still, and holy, and satisfying things,—till the end. And then forth,—once more forth, to the endless and the sinless.

When I come to die, I would rather die in peace than joy. I would wish to meet my Maker as a perfectly forgiven sinner meets Him,—guilty, but pardoned,—naked, but clothed,—vile, but accepted,—a wandering child, brought safe home,—lost in Christ,—all Christ,—assured of Christ's presence,—feeling Christ's hand,—resting on Christ's work,—glimpsing Christ's glory,—'led forth with peace.'

JAMES VAUGHAN.

OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

II.—OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

The Doctrine of Proportion

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness. ROMANS xi. 6, 7, 8.

THE doctrine of proportion in Christian teaching and practice: this is what the Apostle here sets before us. It is stated expressly in the first verse of the text, but it runs by implication throughout.

I. Let us apply this, first, as the Apostle applies it, to Christian practice. We have 'gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.' This is to be our rule of action. It is not enough to ask ourselves what is absolutely right in itself, but to ask what is right under the circumstances, what is right considering our own position, our own gifts, our own calling, our own duties. It is a great thing, as we often hear it said, to have 'right men in right places;' but it is also a great thing, and one which more nearly concerns our own individual practice, to have the right man doing the right thing; and the right thing said and done in the right place, and at the right time, and in the right way. A right thing done in a wrong way is often more mischievous than a thing done wrong altogether. A saying, in itself most true, loses its savour if said at a wrong time. An amusement in itself quite innocent, a practice in itself most holy, a rebuke in itself most just, will become almost wicked, if said or done by a wrong person, or in a wrong place. It is no defence to say that such a thing was good in itself, or good a thousand years or even ten years ago, or good a thousand miles off, or even ten miles off. The question is, whether it is good for us, and for our neighbours; good for us now in the nineteenth century, here in our own homes, in our own circles; good to be done and said by us and for us as we are, and as those about us are.

There is a time and place for everything. How many good plans have come to nought, not from wickedness, not from opposition to what is good, but because men have tried to mend at the wrong time, or refused to mend at the right time—because men have exalted one truth, or one virtue, or one custom, however good in itself, out of all proportion to other truths and duties, and so have driven men by a recoil and reaction into an equal disproportion on

the other side,—over-reverence leading to irreverence, over-strictness to over-laxity, excessive rashness to excessive caution, excessive seriousness to excessive childishness.

Each of us has his own special calling, greater or smaller, more or less varied. Let us not waste our time, or mar our usefulness, by intruding into provinces which are not ours, or overburdening ourselves with labours disproportioned to our strength and powers. The very same gifts which are most useful to one station of life will be a snare and a sin to men in another station, or men in the same station under different circumstances. Any one faculty pushed to extremes, indulged to excess, ceases to be a gift or a blessing, and becomes a curse.

The weak cannot do the work of the strong, the soldier cannot do the work of the nurse, nor the private of the general, nor the general of the private. What discipline effects in the army is effected in our moral duties by a sense of the Apostolical doctrine of proportion. Every one has his own work assigned him by the Captain of our salvation. Not to do that, or to do another's work which is not ours, is to betray the whole; a breach of discipline, a disproportionate zeal, or a disproportionate prudence, may in our spiritual no less than in our earthly warfare be as fatal, though not as guilty, as cowardice, or treachery, or neglect. Great enterprises may be marred, if not ruined; noble characters may be wasted, if not lost, merely by the vain endeavours to do ourselves what would be far better done by others. Allow in others—claim for yourselves—a division of labour, a division of responsibility.

II. And this leads us from the duty of doing things according to the right station and circumstances to the duty of doing them in the right way. Here also the Apostle indicates the true proportion of action. 'He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.' How well these words express the exact garnish and flavour with which our actions should be served up at the sacrificial feast of the Christian life. 'He that giveth, with simplicity.' How greatly the value of a gift depends on the manner of giving! 'He who gives soon,' according to the old proverb, 'gives twice.' So he who gives with simplicity, that is, with singleness of purpose, without an underhand design, without expecting praise or notice, he gives twice, thrice, a hundredfold more than he who gives grudgingly, than he who gives late, than he who gives ostentatiously. One gift well given is as good as a thousand; a thousand gifts ill given are hardly better than none. 'He that ruleth, with diligence.' He that ruleth, he that hath the charge of others, he that hath the charge of a household, of a school, of a commonwealth,

how can he so rule as to rule well, fitly, appropriately? He may rule powerfully, imperiously; he may rule so that all those below him may be afraid of him; he may rule so that the institution may go on in apparent prosperity: yes, he may do all this, and yet he may not rule well; there may still be wanting that peculiar method, that peculiar fitness, which will give life and substance to the whole. What is wanted is that he should 'rule with diligence;' 'with earnestness,' with his heart and soul in the work, 'doing all that he finds to do with all his might.' That is the true secret of influence, of government, of prosperity, of power, in great societies or in small, over many or over few. 'He that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.' How easy it is to show mercy in such a way that it shall be no mercy, and how truly has the Apostle laid his hand on the exact quality which causes kindness to be really kind, and mercy really merciful. Not tenderness, not generosity, no; but something which we can all command—'cheerfulness;' a bright smile, a beaming countenance, a playful word, these are the accompaniments that find an entrance into the closed heart, and raise the downcast eye, and bless him that gives and him that takes.

III. But there is yet one other subject to which I would apply the rule, that to which the Apostle himself first applies it: 'He that prophesieth, let him prophesy according to the proportion of faith.' It is not only in practice but in teaching, and in learning, that this Apostolical doctrine of proportion is needed. It is important, first, for the preacher, teacher, expounder of God's truth, to prophesy, to teach, 'according to the proportion of his own faith;' not to assume feelings which are not his own, not to urge truths of which he himself does not feel the value, but to teach according to his own knowledge, his own experience, his own thoughts. But, secondly, it is important for us all so to seek, and so to find, and so to teach all truth, as not to forget what are the due proportions of the truth itself. Christian truth, Scriptural truth, Catholic truth, is not of one kind only, but of many. It has its lights and shades, its foregrounds and its distances; it has its lessons of infinitely various significance and importance, some significant always, some significant at one time, some at another; some important in themselves, some of no importance except in connection with others. Woe be to us if, instead of 'rightly dividing the word of truth,' we confound all its parts together. It is only by following 'the proportion of faith' that we can rightly understand and act on any part of it. We may believe correctly on every single point, yet if we view these points out of their proper connection and proportions, our view of the whole faith may be as completely wrong as if on every single point we had been involved in fatal error.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Keep to the spirit of the Bible, and keep to the spirit of the Prayer-Book; and then we may be sure that one truth will not be unduly strained by bearing a weight which can only be carried by many at once. We may not be right in all particulars, but the general frame and structure of our minds will then be according to the due proportion of the faith of the Gospel of Christ, and the faith of the Church of these realms. A. P. STANLEY.

Not Slothful in Business.

Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord. ROMANS xii. 11.

HERE are your three relationships of life: to the world around you,—to your own heart,—to God. And a word for each. To the world around,—in your 'business,'—*diligence*; to your own heart,—in your 'spirit,'—'*fervent*;' to God,—in everything,—'*service*,' direct service: 'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.'

Or, you may take it thus. Two secrets of one great duty. The duty,—an earnest life; the two ways to it,—a burning love, and a high end: 'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.'

Or, there is a trinity, a trinity of human life, corresponding to the Trinity of the Eternal Godhead. To the Father: 'The Father worketh hitherto,' and every child of His says, 'I work:' 'I must be about my Father's business.' To the Holy Ghost,—who is the Fire of the flame,—a glowing spirit: 'Did not our hearts burn within us?' To the Son: 'I am among you as he that serveth.' 'Whose I am, and whom I serve.' 'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.'

There is no living being whose business if he will look for it, he will not find marked out.

There is no living being whose business is not appropriate, large, varied, and inexpressibly important.

Every one has an inward commerce with his own soul,—to take care of it,—to feed it,—to teach it,—to dress it.

Every one has his home circle, and his outer circle, to occupy truly, wisely, lovingly.

Every one has money to get, or money to spend.

Every one has either to learn, or to teach,—or both.

Every one has a trade,—or a profession,—or a work providentially assigned to him; or leisure to employ usefully; and a work which he may make for himself to do.

Every one has a talent or a sympathy to use.

Every one has a call and an open door somewhere.

Every one has a heaven to get, and a heaven to fill.

Not one of these, but all of these, make the 'business' belonging to every one; and, in the language of God, he must do it, 'not slothfully.' It is one of those negatives of which the Bible is fond, and which make the strongest positives.

'Not slothful.' Not putting into it the least amount of labour and self-denial which he can. Not as the play and the exception of life. Not in a way which costs him nothing. Not half-heartedly and sleepily; not procrastinatingly; not weakly and sentimentally; not as one who is his own, or who can trifle with his work; not with a reluctant mind; not with a capricious will; 'not slothfully.'

II. Let me say some reasons why a Christian must *not* be 'slothful in business.'

First. He is the follower of One who worked as never man worked.

Second. He is much observed, and he is to be the pattern to all.

Third. As his mercy exceeds, so his conduct must exceed, in everything.

Fourth. He has an eternity before him, and an eternity within him; and he must throw that eternity into everything.

Fifth. He accepts his 'business' as given by God,—for 'he is not his own.'

Sixth. He knows his responsibilities in life, and the account which he must, one day, render at the judgment-seat of Christ, for every word, work, and thought.

Seventh. Every moment is a purchased moment. Himself is purchased. Purchased, at what a price!

Eighth. He works in the confidence and certainty of a blessing.

Ninth. He is watching always for a coming very near and very dear; and how will he wish his dear Lord to find him?

Tenth. He longs to have something done which he may lay at that dear Saviour's feet.

Eleventh. He is sure of a rest presently.

Twelfth. And yet he is preparing for a world where all is active love. 'They rest not day or night.' And he must be practising those lessons, and he must be rehearsing those services.

III. To secure right 'business,'—done in the right way—there must be two things: there must be the glow of the heart, and there must be the true focus of action.

The whole is 'a threefold cord,' of which the strength of each part lies in the union—and which unity 'cannot be quickly broken.'

If you have failed in the first, it is because you have been wanting in the second and third. You can never sever with impunity what

God has joined together. 'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.'

There are latent fires in our earth which, though they be invisible, affect the whole system of nature, and without which neither the waters, nor the atmosphere, nor the soil of this world, could fulfil their proper functions.

It is so with the hidden fires of a man. Every man's heart is an altar. But what is an altar without a sacrifice? And what is a sacrifice without fire? And whence is the fire to come which is to kindle the sacrifice on the altar, but from heaven?

There must be the glow of the affections. The glow of the mind is love,—for love is perfect. But every love will not do. Every love does not pervade and fill the whole being of a man. The love, which is to carry everything up to heaven, must first come down from heaven. Every other is, after all, 'strange fire;' and woe to the man who 'offers strange fire' upon God's altar!

Let me explain to you. You must first feel that you are loved. For all true human love is a reflection of God's love. You must feel that you are loved. For this you must believe, and not doubt you are forgiven,—for you never really feel that you are loved until you are conscious that you are forgiven.

But, once believe that, for Christ's sake, you are pardoned, and a real child of God in the highest sense, by your union with Christ, and then a spark is set alight in your soul, which will burn on and on, and increase for ever and ever.

You must feel it. Thousands of kind things, providences,—thoughts,—lights thrown upon passages of Scripture,—emanations of the Holy Ghost,—heavenly radiancy—will nourish it. It will grow. At times it will be intense. The closer you live to God, the intenser it will be.

But not always intense. Not always really bright: sometimes it will be only 'smoking flax!' still, the very smoking shows it is alight. And all the affections—one after another—will catch the flame.

You will have an ardent fire for other people, especially for their souls. Your longing will be to warm others with the warmth with which you yourselves are warmed of God.

What you want is to light the fire that you may wake the sparkle; and then to fan the sparkle that you may get a glow.

The way is to open your heart to receive the rays which are always pouring down, but are hindered by the closed eye of unbelief, or by the veil of pride, or by the thicknesses of the intervening medium of some allowed sin.

From the time that the light is in your soul, everything will grow

impulsive. We know that all light is vibration. When that light is really in your heart, it will make its effulgence.

There will be a motive power within which will make perpetual motion; and if you are true to it, it will make all animation. It is the law of its being. Jesus and 'sloth' are an impossible combination. 'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit.'

And now everything has found its proper centre. There are the orbits of Jesus; but Jesus is the Sun of the system.

You will see Christ; you will draw from Christ; you will feel Christ; you will point to Christ; you will serve Christ. He is to you what He ought to be, and what He must be to every one that is saved, a Circle,—the Arbiter of destiny,—the Beginning of all,—the Sum of all,—the Centre of all,—the Lord of all. And in all, and far above all, you love Him, you honour Him, you regard Him.

To some the life which yet stretches on before you may look still a long and dreary ridge.

But, be the years how many soever: be it that 'in the day the drought consumes you,—and the frost by night;'—be it that 'sleep departeth from your eyes,' and all is disappointment, and you do but 'accomplish as a hireling your days:'—still, were they multiplied a hundredfold,—were the servitude ever so intense,—if Christ is yours, and you are His, it will 'seem to you but a few days for the love you have' to Him.

For you have learned the three great secrets of all happiness—here and for ever—a busy life, a warm heart, a single end: 'not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord!'

JAMES VAUGHAN.

Sympathy and Condescension.

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. . . . Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. ROMANS xii. 15, 16.

I. 'REJOICE with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.'

The words are very familiar to us; but is the thing which they signify?

It is a call, you observe, to sympathy. That lies on the surface. But notice what S. Paul meant by sympathy; how he describes it. Was any definition of sympathy ever equally perfect?

(1) Take it in two parts. 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice.' It is an old remark, that this is more difficult than to weep with them that weep. Human nature, fallen and unrenewed, is said to find even

in the misfortunes of friends something not wholly unpleasing. And, without dwelling upon that worst development of the feeling, at least we may say that the prosperity of others is sometimes difficult to rejoice in; that, though congratulation, more or less formal, more or less hearty, is generally ready, it does not always imply fellow-joy, community of rejoicing; and that there is a point beyond which the happiness of others becomes actually provoking to us; there is a joy, the sight of which wearies and at last irritates; a fulness of success, and honour, and wealth, which we either compare invidiously with our own lot, or else grudge to its possessor.

Let us practise ourselves in this rule, that we rejoice with them that do rejoice. It is as much a Christian duty as the maxim which follows it. Let us endeavour, in little matters, within our own doors first of all—for there the grace is best learned—to be glad when another is glad, to feel another's joy as our joy, to be not willing only, but thankful, that another should have, even though that other's gain should be outwardly our own loss. Try this, and, I do not say we shall find it easy—no Christian grace, as distinguished from natural disposition, is easy—yet, on the other hand, to them that believe in Christ and in the Holy Spirit every Christian grace is possible, and it is their happiness, no less than their duty, to strive after each.

This particular attainment is, in a marked manner, its own reward. Once let another's happiness, another's honour, another's enjoyment, become really ours by a sincere and hearty sympathy, and it is quite evident that the happiness of our own life must be, not doubled, but multiplied a thousand-fold. The chances of marked joy, if I might so express it, are perhaps, for any one given person, less than one to a million; but the chances of some one whom we know thus rejoicing are infinitely greater: and, if it once matters not to us whether the cause of rejoicing be in another's lot or in our own, then, from some source or other, we are quite sure of joy: he who can rejoice with them that rejoice must be a happy man: the waves of personal accident beat upon the rocks far below him: he himself dwells in the region above, where eternal sunshine settles and gladdens. 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled.'

'And weep with them that weep.' Said we that this was an easier rule? Look into it, and we shall find that also has its difficulties.

Many persons in this generation—and we may well thank God for it—exert themselves in ministering to human suffering. It is a first Christian duty. It is made the very test of Christian discipleship.

'Inasmuch as ye have done it'—ministered, that is, to the sick, the hungry, the prisoner—'unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.' And, amongst equals in social position, we count any one heartless who does not in some way, by word or act, show sympathy with sorrow. But again, even here, I would say that it is far easier to do these things than really to know anything of 'fellow-sorrow,' of community in sorrowing, of weeping with them that weep.

We must practise this healing art; practise it as a difficult art; practise it, as we would any other difficult attainment, by care, by pains, by prayer, by studying our Saviour's example, by watchful self-forgetfulness; practise it, not as a thing to be assumed—sorrow is quick-sighted, and will soon find out the pretence of sympathy—but rather as a thing to be inspired into us by the Holy Spirit of God, who can, by His mighty working, turn the stoniest, the most selfish heart into a very fountain of sympathy and of tenderness. Of all the designations which a human being, under Christ's teaching, can acquire, none is so valuable, in the estimate of a truly Christian ambition, as this, 'a son of consolation.'

II. 'Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.' I think it probable that the more correct rendering of the words would be, 'Condescend to those things which are lowly.' We see a reference here to the words of the Psalmist: 'Lord, I am not high-minded: I have no proud looks. I do not exercise myself in great matters, which are too high for me. But I refrain my soul, and keep it low, like a child that is weaned from his mother.'

Is it not just the neglect of this rule, which makes the chief evil of what is called society? Not even frivolity, not even waste of time, not even dissipation of thought, not even disregard of duty, is a more serious charge against a professedly Christian world, in its mode of social intercourse, than this; that it will set its heart on high things, and will not condescend either to persons or to things of low degree. It is a constant pursuit of high things; a struggle to rise one step higher, and then one yet higher, on the ladder of ambition, whatever its particular ambition be; it may be of rank, it may be of fame, it may be of fashion, it may be of excitement generally; most often it is, in some shape or other, the ambition of distinction; but, whatever the particular aim, it is briefly to be described as 'a minding of high things,' and the proper remedy for it is that here prescribed by S. Paul, 'Condescend to things that are lowly.'

How great a work might true charity do in this respect, in relation to society! Even in its choice of associates: why call only to the feasts the rich, the great, the intellectual? why not remember sometimes those to whom to visit would be a pleasure received rather than

given; to whom the sight of a new face, the hearing of a new voice, would be of itself a luxury and a progress? And how good would it be for all who are much, of necessity or by choice, in what we call briefly the world, to force themselves sometimes into a totally opposite scene: let them learn by their own observation what human life is to a different and far larger part of their race: let them look in upon the abodes of poverty, of privation, of sickness, of unhappiness, which surround here on every side the dwellings of luxury and of abundance: let them listen sometimes to the history of such a life; its tale of gradual deterioration or of sudden sin, of early neglect, of vicious example, of total disregard on the part of those who ought to have instructed and remonstrated and warned, at last of utter hopelessness, of despair for both worlds; let them hear and ponder these things, condescending, with humility, and surely with thankfulness to Him who has made them to differ, to persons and things of low degree; and assuredly they will return into their own circle of life wiser if sadder men; set upon redeeming the time; set upon remembering God and their brethren; set upon raising the tone, both in point of religion and of charity, of those with whom they associate; set upon doing good, while they live, with the talents, material, mental, and spiritual, with which God has so largely, so distinctively, endowed them.

DEAN VAUGHAN.

Preference for Lowly Things.

Set not your mind on high things, but condescend to things that are lowly.
ROMANS xii. 16.

WHEN S. Paul comes to the close of that grand exposition of the divine purpose running through the ages which fills the first eleven chapters of his Epistle to the Romans, he bursts into a transport of adoring gratitude, and then, in the chapter from which my text is taken, he hastens to draw the cords of love he has been vindicating more closely about the hearts and consciences of individual men. 'I beseech you,' he says, 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God—these mercies which have now been set in array before you, which the blindness of the Jew has not finally forfeited, but only diverted in fuller tide towards the Gentile—I beseech you by these that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service; and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.' And then he goes on to show in detail what he means by this transformation. He pursues into every region of conduct that renewal of life and character for which he pleads, insisting upon

love as its one all-sufficient inspiration. He sees no possibility of vital change save through recognition of the great truth of Christian brotherhood: 'We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.' Instead of being isolated, independent, self-contained, we are mutually related, mutually dependent, mutually interested and concerned, even as a human body, in which the eye, and the hand, the foot, and the head, have each indeed its own separate work and function, but cannot exercise that function, any one of them, without the healthy co-operation of all the rest.

This is the cardinal doctrine of Pauline Christianity, this conviction of unity and variety of the one and the many in what we have learned from S. Paul to think and to speak of as the Christian body. He proceeds to develop it and to point out its manifold applications. He shows us how it is to leaven all our views of obligation, to affect all our fulfilment of everyday duty, how it is to elevate our motives, to quicken our sense of responsibility for every gift and opportunity we enjoy, how, in a word, it is to inspire every part of the secret and personal life. A living writer has pictured S. Paul drawing breath at the close of his famous argument, and then surveying with eager glance all the contingencies for which love can provide, and as he does so, dictating to his amanuensis those immortal maxims and watchwords of his, until they grew under his eye into a well-nigh perfect manual of Christian temper and practice.

I. Now it is on one of these precepts which fill the chapter that I would fix your thoughts. Rightly understood, it is one of the most practical we can set ourselves to master. I have taken the wording of it advisedly from our New Version, which, though it is certainly nearer to the original than that of the Authorised Version, nevertheless fails to convey its full meaning. I cannot but regret that the revisers, to whose labours we owe so much, should have relegated to the margin their rendering of the peculiar verb which is given in the text as 'condescend.' 'Set not your mind on high things,' says S. Paul, 'but be carried away with the lowly.' That word 'condescend' had no place in the vocabulary of S. Paul; it is utterly alien from his thought. Condescension to men of low estate is an idea not only abhorrent to his mind, but totally at variance with the spirit of Christianity. No such thing is contemplated in the Gospel as possible, far less as permissible—this patronage of inferiors—and if there is one thing in the world which we feel confident that S. Paul would have denounced as unchristian, it is that state of mind which the term 'condescension' implies, a self-conscious stooping on the part of the more fortunate, the wealthier, or the nobler born, to the brother of low degree. There was only one act of condescension of which he knew, and that one act had made any other impossible and

inconceivable. He knew of One who had indeed stooped from an infinite height, One whose descent to us could be expressed in no other terms and measured by no intervals of this world's rank, and, in presence of that self-chosen humiliation of the divine, all human condescension vanished. The gospel is the great leveller, not indeed of earthly rank, but of proud human hearts. It guards and consecrates all lawful authority, it gives no licence to anarchy and confusion, it enjoins beautiful obedience and submission, but, at the same time, it scatters broadcast the patent of heaven's nobility, it brings the prince and the peasant, the millionaire and the pauper, on to the same platform of eternal destiny; it links them in a great brotherhood of common loss and a common redemption. It is from this point of view that condescension becomes a thing so unnatural, so base; for it implies the use of a false and fictitious standard of comparison of personal values, and will not bear examination in God's sight for a moment. Let us banish the thought, if ever we have done S. Paul the injustice to harbour it, that he could commend the most odious counterfeit or caricature of love, or ever be untrue to a doctrine which was dear to him as life. 'We, being many, are one body in Christ,' all alike lost, all alike redeemed, all united through Him in a communion and fellowship which shall endure when all the distinctions which separate us here have passed away for ever. It is this superiority to condescension which, I think, we trace in the careers and characters of men and women who have wielded the best influence and drawn to themselves the fullest confidence and love. Some of you will perhaps remember the touching tribute which was borne by a native Christian of the Southern Seas to the martyred Bishop Patteson, who had given up his brilliant prospects in England, and severed himself from devoted kindred and friends, to live and labour for Christ among the savages of Melanesia. 'He did not despise any one,' said this poor convert, 'he did not despise any one, nor reject any one with scorn, whether it were a white or black man; he thought of them all as one, and he loved them all alike.' There was no condescension there, though teacher and taught were parted by the whole interval between the highest European culture and naked barbarism.

II. But it is more than doubtful whether, in the passage before us, S. Paul is thinking of persons at all, and the authors of our New Version have decided that he was not, and have given to his words their obvious translation, high things being set in natural contrast with lowly things: 'Set not your mind on high things, but be swept away with, or carried along by, things that are lowly.' The word used is, as I have just said, of peculiar force, signifying an overwhelming constraint, an irresistible pressure or fascination. In

the mind of the man who used it, we cannot doubt to what it pointed. Surely to His example, who for our sakes took up with the things that were lowly, who deliberately declined the things that the world covets and admires, and cast in His lot with the needy, the nameless, and the homeless.

It is this preference that has consecrated the humble side of life. 'If He, your Lord and Master, made so lowly a choice,' S. Paul would say, 'then lowly things must have an attraction for you. You cannot despise what He accepted.' Before Him were outspread 'all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them,' and He might have made them His own; the prince of this world came and laid them at His feet, but He spurned them from Him and chose instead the path of humble service, of poverty and toil.

III. 'But,' it will be said, 'how far does the Apostolic precept carry us? Is there any limit to the preference for lowly things? Are we to draw from the text a warning against all high aims in the work of our life? Does the Gospel condemn ambition in every form? Does it indeed discourage that desire to succeed which seems to be strongest in the best and most useful of men?' Assuredly not. On the contrary, Christianity, the religion of humility, sets our minds on higher things than any other—nay, on the very highest that can kindle the ambition of human hearts. Ours is described by S. Paul himself as a 'high calling;' we are bidden to rise to the full height of it. In one region of it at least—in the region of spiritual attainment, in the formation of character—we have no leave to take up with the things that are lowly; we are urged to be ever adding grace to grace, to be growing from strength to strength, to leave the past behind, and to press onward to the things that are before. The same inspired teacher, who says, 'Set not your mind on high things,' says also, 'Covet earnestly the best gifts,' shows us that this aspiring temper is not only lawful, but worthy of our most strenuous cultivation; and when he writes elsewhere, 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things,' he puts before us as objects of thought and endeavour all that is highest and noblest in the world. Yes, the high things which in God's providence are put within our reach, and are worthy to be called high—the culture of intellect and taste, the diligent development of fitness for the work we have chosen, or which has been marked out for us—these are not the things on which we are forbidden to set our minds. On the contrary, it is a religious duty to open our eyes to their value and their charm, to realise their purpose, to remember their variety. The gospel of Christ, rightly understood, sanctions all effort to

acquire the best things and turn them to account by honest endeavour to appreciate the works and to interpret the thought of God, all study of this wonderful scene in which He has placed us, all labour spent on perfecting our faculties and increasing our aptitude for the needful business of this world. If we are wise in our generation, we shall set our minds gratefully on these things, these high things, and shall believe that through all that ministers to what is noblest in ourselves we grow in likeness to Him and become less unworthy to be owned by Him.

The mind which was in Christ can hallow the earthly task on which you are called to spend your powers. Surrender yourself, as He did, to the attractions of lowly things, and the only things which deserve to be called great or high will surely become yours. 'He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'

CANON DUCKWORTH.

III. OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL.

The First Miracle of Jesus.

S. John ii. 1-11.

I. IT was not without a special purpose that the evangelist prefaced his relation with the apparently unnecessary words, 'And on the third day.' Those few words are intended to call our attention to the course of events at the time of the miracle afterwards described by him. We must look back upon a succession of remarkable days spoken of in the preceding chapter, and immediately following one upon another. On the first of these the embassy was sent to the Baptist by the members of the Sanhedrim. On the second, the Baptist had pointed out to the multitude the Saviour just returned triumphant from His temptation in the wilderness, and had proclaimed Him 'the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.' On the third day this was repeated, and with such blessed effect that two of His faithful disciples, Andrew, and probably our evangelist John, began to follow their Lord,—Andrew also bringing Simon Peter to share in this grace. On the fourth of these days our Lord found Philip, and Philip, in his turn, the guileless Nathanael, and both likewise followed Jesus. Then came a fifth and a sixth day, of which the evangelist relates nothing remarkable; we only know that then the journey of our Lord with His disciples from the region of the Jordan to Galilee

took place, and that they were on that journey when Philip was found. But immediately after them came a seventh day, which brought with it the first miracle of Jesus, and which in our text is called the third day, evidently reckoning from the departure for Galilee and from the finding of Philip and Nathanael.

The evangelist here draws our attention to the rapid development of the first signs of Christ's kingdom, in which one event followed another with a speed that was deeply significant. That same rapidity may be remarked in the first divine workings in the human heart; and that, upon the present occasion, in the existing state of things, it was not only important but absolutely necessary, is proved by the words of our text, 'And on the third day.'

No occasion could have been more appropriate than this for the great work which Jesus had to perform. The scene of His earliest manifestations of divine power lay in the neighbourhood of His own former home at Nazareth, the place of all others where men were likely to stumble at His outward lowliness, where his humble position had been so well known, and where, for that very reason, it was especially needful that He should evince some strong proof of His majesty. Now, at this wedding in Cana it was probable that not only His disciples, but also His mother and His brethren, as well as a numerous company of guests, would be led to rejoice in Him; for at such a time their minds would be specially impressionable. An occasion like the present was calculated to bring the hearts of all into proper train for comprehending readily a manifestation of His divinity. Holy joy is surely a fitting preparation for such a manifestation, and we cannot doubt that it was with pure and holy, not with frivolous gladness, that that bridal pair celebrated their nuptials, Jesus and His disciples being witnesses of their happiness.

Here, at the very outset of our Lord's ministry, and under circumstances which no one could have foreseen, an opportunity arose for Him to show to whom He wills to give Himself, namely, to the poor and the lowly, to the despised and the wretched, to those whom the world overlooks, but who by Him are highly esteemed. Here, too, Jesus could make plain to His disciples that which it was needful they should understand with reference to the conduct of John the Baptist, whose disciples they had also been, manifesting to them His own peculiar character by means of a miracle. Lastly, now was the time to bestow upon that poor but pious pair that inexhaustible and incorruptible treasure-banquet (which He still gives to His people), and to bear witness to the truth at this beginning of His office of teacher, that 'although He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich' (2 Cor. viii. 9).

II. 'Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And

they filled them up to the brim.' And now took place that which unbelief wonders at more than faith does,—that which, as S. Augustine says, takes place every year in the vine, through the divine and miraculous power of the same hand. And just as, each year, the moisture dropped by the clouds is used by that Almighty power to create wine in the vine, so did He cause the water poured by the servants into the waterpots to become wine. This marvellous act, says S. Augustine again, no longer causes us astonishment, for it has become a daily occurrence. 'And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.' There was always one person, frequently one of the invited guests, appointed to take the oversight of the feast, and he it was to whom our Lord alluded. Great must have been the surprise of the governor, when he all at once tasted this delicious, precious wine. He could not imagine from whence it had come, and he knew not that when the Saviour does give wine, He gives only of the best and richest. 'When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants which drew the water knew): the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.'

The world's maxim is well known to us all, 'the best first, and afterwards that which is worse.' When we have satiated ourselves with the good things of the world, she will, however dainty we may be, feed us with nothing but husks. The story of the prodigal son teaches us this (S. Luke xv. 15, 16). But the worthy governor knew not the immutable principle of God, which is carried out in every part of the divine economy, that He keeps the best to the last. 'In His presence is fulness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore' (Ps. xvi. 12). And now let us see what impression this wonderful act of our Lord's made upon those who witnessed it. S. John gives us a very short but a very expressive description of what followed: 'This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him.'

What most impressed the disciples of our Lord in this miracle was His glory, and we too must have been similarly struck, if we have hearts capable of beholding such glory—'the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'

He who fails to see this glory must be blind indeed. It was such a spectacle of the glory of the Lord, and such a faith as this, that the disciples needed; for the days were at hand when doubts, temptations, separation from their Lord and Master, and many sufferings,

were in store for them. But they walked unhurt in the midst of the fiery trials that beset them, praising and glorifying God, upheld by the image of the Saviour, ever bright and vivid in their recollection, and strengthened by the grace of God, till the day arrived when they beheld their Lord once more, more lovely and adorable than before, and 'rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory,' while they looked forward to another and a greater marriage-banquet,—that banquet of which the inspired disciple S. John writes in the book of Revelation, 'Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. . . . Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.'

R. ROTHE.

The Christian Use of Society.

And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage. S. JOHN ii. 2.

'IT is not good that man should be alone.' A life of religious contemplation—the highest life of which a solitary being is capable—would leave undeveloped some of the noblest faculties, and preclude the attainment of that end which religion itself has in view.

It is only sin which necessitates seclusion. We must go apart now, that we may bewail our separate transgressions, and get ourselves separately washed from selfish stains of evil. When we are cleansed from sin, and separately reunited to God, then we shall be all one, and need no more isolation.

Even now, even here, in a world of sin and sorrow, we need not be, we are not, alone. Not alone in redemption: they who fell together, were together redeemed: 'That he might gather together in one all things in Christ.' Not alone in trouble: 'the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.' Not alone in grace: 'all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.' Not alone in worship: it is 'where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name' that He Himself is 'there in the midst of them.' Not alone in Sacraments: 'By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body:' 'We being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.' Not alone, certainly, in the end and object of all these gifts: 'Till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man.'

We are to speak upon 'the Christian use of society;' meaning by 'society' the social converse, the friendly intercourse, the neighbourly visits and reunions of this world.

I. And the very subject implies that society (in this sense) is lawful, and has a use. I know that it has an abuse too. But so have all God's gifts. Food, exercise, toil, affection, speech, influence, genius itself, each has its abuse in a thousand forms of evil: yet none but a madman therefore proscribes it: to regulate is not to discard. Nay, we cannot if we would. What God gives we must take; the only question is, how? in what spirit? for use, or for abuse? A man who pretends to discard really uses, but uses amiss.

Society was ordained, first of all, for simple relaxation. Yes, we have missed the point of all, if we would make social converse laborious. It is the rest, it is not the work, of life. A busy brain must have its remission. The bow cannot be always bent. Grudge not, for God grudges not, to a working man, of high or low estate, his hour of simple refreshment, while he partakes of his Maker's blessings, and practises those lower charities which are the solace and the brightness of a Christian home. A man who goes into society bent upon innocent relaxation will seldom be a mischievous man there: he will soften down harshnesses and smooth away roughnesses, he will alleviate gloom and exorcise ill-temper, if he does not actually raise a thought towards God, or speak one word directly in a Saviour's praise.

II. Beware of doing harm in society. Yes, the word may be a strong one, in reference to the social gatherings of a little neighbourhood of professed Christians; strong, yet not too strong.

1. Pride may come there. Our Saviour noted as one of the crying sins of the Pharisee, his love of the 'chief rooms' (places) at feasts. Beware of those false disciples who love the foremost seats in church and the chief places at feasts!

2. And vanity may come there. Vanity of dress, vanity of face, vanity of manners, and vanity of conversation. We come, not to give pleasure, but to please. Souls have been lost in society. To be a good talker—to be a clever jester—to be a pungent story-teller—to be a desired element in general conversation—these things have become an ambition, an aim and goal of life, just as others have found it in riches or in honours.

3. Pride may come, and vanity—and alas! charity may not come there. It comes not, or it stays not, where scandal is; where discussion of other men's matters, other men's conduct, other men's characters, is; where idle tales, purposeless at best, probably but one-third true, more than possibly false to the core, are retailed, commented upon, and laughed over, though the appearance of the person discussed would instantly silence and abash the loudest! These things are the unchristian use of society.

III. But in all watchings against evil there should be a positive

striving after good. It is not by encountering our enemies in detail that we best overcome them, whether in speech or in life. Let the negative have its positive. Let a high aim and a Christian motive go with us into society, and we shall not be there like men armed for self-defence or chained against offending, but rather as free and large-hearted friends, fearing no evil because God is with them.

1. The desire and the prayer for God's blessing will fulfil itself most often in undesigned and unstudied ways. A Christian man in society does not always talk of sacred things. He never forces religious conversation. Now and then he must express, with all courtesy, his dissent from some antichristian maxim. Even the world knows how to despise a Christian who is ashamed of Christ. 'If any man speak,' S. Peter says, 'let him speak as it were oracles of God;' such words (he seems to say) as have truth in them, and faith, and wisdom, however common the topics to which they appear to have regard.

2. 'There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage.' And, when there, He disdained not to share the simple festivity: and when they wanted wine, He even wrought a miracle for its supply. Surely there was an example in all this, as well as an evidence. Surely His disciples are still called, and may still go as His disciples, to the marriage-feasts of earth! And when there, they may remember Him, and pray Him to be with them. He disdains not to refresh them by this human converse, after work done for Him in harvest or in battlefield. This is one of the 'tables spread for them in the wilderness,' that they may go forth with a more cheerful countenance to the toils and struggles of to-morrow.

DEAN VAUGHAN.

Christ and Society

And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage. S. JOHN ii. 2.

THE season is the Epiphany, and each Sunday of the season has an Epiphany of its own.

The general idea of the Epiphany is, 'God manifested in the flesh.'

Taking, as its pictorial title or frontispiece, the revelation of the Divine Child in His cradle to the mysterious Magi in Bethlehem; seeing in that journey the type of human inquiry, in all time, after Him who is 'the Desire of all Nations;' seeing in that 'Star in the East' a type of God's assistance, in reason, in conscience, in revela-

tion, in the Spirit, of that search, of that 'feeling after Him,' which is the condition and the beginning of 'finding;' seeing in that opening of the treasures, in that presentation of the gold and the myrrh and frankincense, a type of the self-dedication of man, in every possession and every faculty and every affection, to One whom he has first found as His Lord and his God—the Church goes on, in the successive Sundays of the season, to set before us Jesus Christ, in the one all-comprehending character of 'God with us,' as entering into every age, and every condition joyous or grievous, of human being, that He may, as it is written by S. Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians, 'fill all things' with His grace, with His benediction, with *Himself*.

I. To-day the Epiphany is to society—using that word in its commonest, most modern acceptation. The scene is laid to-day in a wedding. Christ is there, with His mother, and with His disciples, an invited guest. He is exemplifying, at that earliest moment of His ministry—just returned from baptism, from temptation, from being designated as 'the Lamb of God that takes away sin,' from calling His first five disciples, not yet to an official, but rather to an occasional or temporary companionship—He is exemplifying, I say, at this first moment, that rule of His self-manifestation, 'The Son of Man is come eating and drinking,' regardless if cavillers even say, 'Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber!'

And not only is His presence here an encouragement to innocent festivity; His conduct, His ministry, on the occasion, is not less so. His first miracle is wrought at a marriage feast; and that miracle itself consists in a multiplication of the materials of feasting. With a prodigality characteristic of the Divine—itself typical of grace and blessing—He lavisheth forth, as the King of Nature, gifts commonly requiring all manner of processes, human and superhuman; gifts too capable of large abuse; gifts which, because capable of abuse, man's wisdom would proscribe altogether—rendering many passages of Scripture silly and nugatory, and violating every principle alike of human responsibility and of Divine promise. Christ judged not so. Without stint or grudging, without staying even to caution or to forewarn, He bids the servants draw forth from those six immense pitchers—set there, not for drinking, but for washing—the rich, the generous wine; acting, Himself, by anticipation, upon that which should afterwards be made the law of His gospel, 'Use hospitality one to another without grudging; as every man hath received the gift'—and *He* had all gifts—'even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.'

II. The very fact of Christ being there made everything safe, everything innocent, at that wedding. Do you suppose that He

took part in revelry, in excess, in frivolity, in vain, censorious, licentious talk? Do you suppose that He ministered to the wiles of the flesh by helping the intoxication of the drunken? Be sure that that host, that bridegroom, that 'ruler,' those guests, were either God-fearing people, or made so for the time. His worst enemies never accused Him of sin. If they spoke of Him as a friend of sinners, because He ate with them, conscience told them that there was all the difference in kind between the love of the sinner and the love of the sin, and that, if Jesus Christ 'came eating and drinking,' it was because He would redeem things 'which should be for our health' from being turned, through a godless abuse, into 'occasions of falling.'

We know how religion, before or without Christ, has dealt with society. Its resolution, its effort, its prayer, has been, to be 'taken out of' it. Its one idea has been to save itself. We do not condemn—it is idle to do so—the soul's instinct of self-preservation. We do not believe that any man can pray the prayer, deliberately, and meaning it, 'Let me be accursed, lost, for my brethren.' If the prayer quits the door of the lips, it corrects itself in the uttering. The man who so prays cannot be lost. We are meant to save ourselves. But this instinct of self-preservation is often shown in ways suicidal. Selfishness, bad in nature, is worse in religion. And there is such a thing. Christ's Epiphany to society was an original idea (with reverence be the word spoken) among the religions. There was nothing like it before Him. Deserts and mountains, dens and caves of the earth, not escaped to under persecution, but self-sought as oratories and monasteries of a soaring aspiring piety—these were the dreams, these the ambitions, of every religion but the Christian. Even the Christian religion has relapsed into them. Not only in a form which we may lament, but cannot despise, that, namely, of men whose burden of sin, whose terror of judgment, made them absolutely incapable of the haunts and habits of their fellows, and who must flee somewhere to be alone with their God, if they would not be misanthropes and maniacs amongst the busy and the decorous and the self-complacent of earth. Not thus is Christ's work done upon earth, or His Epiphany made visible to hearts perishing for lack of it.

III. The Epiphany which we celebrate to-day has been felt by the Evangelist, and by all disciples of love after him, to be characteristic of Jesus Christ. 'He made the water wine.' Is not this the parable of His life? Is it not this which He tarries on earth by His Spirit to do?

What finds He in these huge 'water-pots of stone,' when they are interpreted into realities?

He finds earth covered with fair fabrics of art and man's device;

homes beautiful with natural affection, tables spread with God's bounties, minds capable of deep, of varied emotion, and lives spending themselves in honest laudable enterprises. He finds everything here which can enchain thought to sense, and make it bitter and heartless to say, one to another, 'Arise, and depart—the shadow of death is upon you—this is not your rest.' Into this happiness, with its 'treacherous ashes' above, and its 'latent fires' below, Christ comes, telling of reality, telling of permanence, revealing immortality. He comes not to 'unclothe,' but to 'clothe upon;' to say, Earth is bright, but heaven is brighter: the ruin is beautiful—how much more the temple! Use this world, as not abusing it.

Carrying these thoughts with us, living these convictions, in the society of our fellows, in the sweet secret of our home, the Epiphany of Cana will be ours, and we shall walk in the light of it.

'Both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage.' Not He alone, not they alone—together.

He is present still in our feasts, and His disciples are invited with Him.

DEAN VAUGHAN.

Social Responsibilities.

They have no wine. S. JOHN ii. 3.

IT is a scene such as S. John loves to draw forward—a scene in which the apparent accidents of a passing incident are caught by the flash of the hidden glory that bides its time behind them. He feels how words and acts, in themselves perhaps casual and unconscious, are possessed by a higher spirit of prophecy, so that a phrase, dropped at hazard and unawares, becomes the vessel of that supreme revelation which S. John has, through years of absorbing study, apprehended in its innermost laws. So he fastens on the passing word of the ruler of the feast, 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now,' with the same wonder with which he watched the water and the blood start from the crucified body of the Lord at the touch of the unwitting spear.

I. 'They have no wine!' That is the very heart of the complaint with which we of to-day besiege the compassion of the Lord. We have become increasingly sensitive of the pathos of the fate of those who fall outside the area of God's good gifts. 'They have no wine!' That is what has struck us so profoundly. Entire masses of our population have been discovered to be in that particular plight. It is not so much their abject poverty that we are thinking of; not the

wretched homelessness of those classes who just scrape along from day to day, hovering over the abyss of pauperism or crime, liable to the terrors of starvation at every touch of exceptional pressure. No! rather the phrase from S. John comes to our lips as we rise above all the region of picturesque and melodramatic distress, and consider the lot of those who work their way along in dull, hard, monotonous toil; toil that just carries them through; which uses all their practical forces, and leaves nothing over for relief and for joy; toil that, at its best, still only just sustains them on their feet, and can never venture to slacken, and can never land them in security, far from the peril of lapse, or from the anxiety of what may come on the morrow. There is a hitch somewhere; there is something missing which ought to be there. God never meant human life to be like this. It was never intended to be wholly used up in the mere monotony of work. Everything in nature, though toil for food be its law, is given its opportunity of joy, its sense of fling, its moment of happy brimming release. No one can watch the gathering of birds as they skim over quiet evening waters, or toss themselves in scudding groups against the sunset skies, and not know what is needed to make life complete. It is this element of joyful abandonment that is so terribly lacking from the grimy days of our depressed toilers.

II. 'They have no wine!' To have felt the needs of our fellow-men is to have come under the necessity of meeting them. We cannot have new feelings without, by that very fact, acquiring new responsibilities. We are responsible for the outlook to which our kindled emotions have made us sensitive. We cannot be as though we had never felt them. That is the peril of this increase of pity. If we fail to act upon it—to give it practical results—we become worse than if we had never been stirred. And it therefore becomes very urgent for us to ask ourselves what we are doing with this force so put into our hands. For sympathy is a force. The power to feel is a power to act. It is a store of energy which could be set in use, could be discharged in this direction or in that; and if undischarged, it is wasted—it has been given in vain.

Where, then, is the discharge of that energy, which this intensified sensitiveness has stored, taking place? That is the question for us all. And, thank God, many can give a fair answer to it. In every direction we find men and women who are doing their best to carry wine to those who have none. This is most noticeable and encouraging, that so many who have received any gifts of good cheer themselves, of whatever kind, do hold them in fee for their fellows. They instinctively consider themselves to be in debt to those who have less. They are bound to bring their own advantages to market; they may not hoard them to themselves; they must put them to others' profit

or others' service. They must carry them where they are wanted—to lighten dark places, to relieve the weary tediousness of work.

'Whatever He saith'—that is the thing, the only thing, to be done. It is because all human life is made in Him a holy thing, that therefore every fragment of it has its claims to be considered, to be tended, to be fostered, to be given room, and air, and light, and joy.

And Christ, again, is the Source of the brotherly eagerness in those who have something to give, to share it with those that need it. It is because He has knit us all together in one, that we are pledged to Him to put out our powers to the use of our fellow-men, to hold ourselves in debt to them for all that it is in our hands to do on their behalf. Christ sets that pity, that conscience, moving, which cannot endure that we should enjoy our own good fortune to ourselves alone.

CANON SCOTT HOLLAND.

The Lord's Initiative.

The mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. S. JOHN ii. 3, 4.

I. LET us ask ourselves what it means, this absolute refusal to tolerate advice, to admit a right of judgment, to accept a criticism from without. Here is one who is the very type of self-abnegation, to whom self-assertion is as the sin that would vitiate His claim to be heard. Here is the one whose lordship lies in service, in making Himself one with the least of the poorest, in being despised and of no account. Yet He demands a paramount solitude for Himself, an authority so unique and complete that it is inconceivable that it should be shared with any other. He cannot suffer any one, not His nearest friend or disciple, not His own mother, to stand on that level and to discuss and consult with Him as on an equality. The slightest attempt to infringe this prerogative, however unintentional or amicable, is instantly and vigorously repressed. And we may notice here at this point one of those subtle agreements between the Synoptic Gospels and S. John which are so convincing, so far beyond premeditation. One and all agree absolutely on this matter we are considering. With all their simplicity, the three gospels never for one second allow the solitary pre-eminence of our Lord to be touched, not as if they had consciously thought of it, but out of the sheer impossibility to imagine the opposite.

Who is this who, while mingling with men, can yet never be confounded with men? can never be one among them, however eminent, but has an authority and a position wholly apart and alone, within

which no intrusion of unequals can be imagined or endured? It was impossible to have faith in Him and to doubt His unique supremacy. It is just in ways like this that the secret divinity of our Lord betrays itself, and forces itself home upon our attention, not as some separable element from His humanity, but as involved in it, identified with it, so that it belongs to the impression which His human life makes upon us. We could not imagine it without this factor in it. The weight, the depth, the solemnity, the authority, the very charm of the simple human story all pre-suppose this mysterious background, and yet they do it so naturally and so obviously that it is only when, with the headlong haste of S. Peter, or with the confidence of the blessed mother, we venture to collide with it, that we are startled by a presence that we find we have taken for granted, and which, if we challenge it, insists upon its unique prerogative, which no man can presume to share.

II. 'Mine hour is not yet come.' It is in the control of His own destiny that our Lord will admit no counsel from us. His hours, His moments, for action, these lay absolutely within His own decision; He was their sole deliberate master. This was a point which S. John specially notices and enforces. It all appeared, outwardly, so accidental, His life was so perilously exposed on every side to chance and malice and attack; yet as His disciples watched they detected a strange and undeviating power of self-determination, which enabled our Lord to work in perfect harmony with a fixed purpose which responded to Him from without; so that nothing could happen unawares or out of His control. It all travelled in obedience to His governance, and with the smooth evenness of a machine. Neither the enthusiasm of His friends nor the hate of His foes could hasten the crisis, so long as He Himself held it back. His mother might plead, but 'the hour was not come,' and He would have none of it. The Jews might send officers to take Him, but could not lay hands on Him, for 'His hour was not yet come.' And when at last the supreme moment had struck, it was not the fury of the Pharisee nor the guile of the Sadducee which brought it to pass, but only the masterful decision of that one solitary figure in the upper chamber, who had Himself deliberately authorised the onset and given the signal: 'Father, the hour has come now, glorify Thy Son.' His hour is in His hands; it arrives by set and determined purpose. We cannot hasten it.

There is nothing harder to believe than this, in a day like ours, for whatever else may characterise our times, whether they be big with hope or black with ruin, about one thing we are all agreed, that it is a time of transition, of suspense. Old things are continually passing away in every department of life—assumptions, methods, sympathies

—and we are waiting to see in what form all things will become new. What will be the new poetry, the new philosophy, the new science, the new art, the new humour, and, above all, the new social order? On all sides the older chiefs and prophets who used to guide us are gone, or all but gone; yet the new men have not shown themselves, the new types have not been set. Books are written to sift and explain and to reassure—books able, suggestive, and thoughtful. They help us, they tide us along, they prompt hope, they gain ground, but they do not sweep the field. They do not lift us into a final security; we lay them down one after the other with thanks to God for them, and yet something more has yet to be done, we feel, before the last word has been said. The material collected, the experience gained, awaits the touch of some master-spirit, who will utter the interpretation and make known the dream. Till he arrives, how can we help being excited, upset, and perturbed? Very anxiously we look for the Lord. We are tossed about by the voices that cry confidently, 'Lo here! and lo there!' yet the cloud hangs heavy, and the heaven is dumb, and the day cometh not.

III. And the Church, the faith of Christ, are not these living also in a strangely exciting pause—the pause as of a vast wave before it thunders down on the crashing beach? Such powers are pent up here, such strength of hope, such fervour, such stress of labour, such keen desire, such a heat of devotion! All these have been pressed into this Church of ours for these fifty years, have thrown all their intellectual energy into the reassertion of the Catholic Creed, and yet the effect, the full time, has not yet come. At times it looks as if the Church, in the fire of spiritual loyalty to the unseen Lord, would rush forward over the whole ground, would seize the splendour of the opportunity, would throw herself upon the heart of the English people, and would be met with a welcome that would once again unite the nation into one baptism and one belief. And at times it looks as if the long weary debate had come to an end between religion and science, as if the minor disputes had all been disposed of, and as if the ground were really cleared, and at last the Faith could move out free and beautiful, as an army with banners, rallying to her cry of victory the hosts whom panic had so sorely withheld, gathering up the wide spiritual powers that are now scattered in dreary disorder, and welding them, by one imperial impulse, into a massive onset that would spread righteousness and establish peace over the face of the earth. It might come at any moment, this happy Epiphany. The way is clear, the power is ready, everything invites, but still it does not happen. 'Mine hour has not yet come.' There is then an hour coming. The Virgin was right in her expectation, in her anticipation, and we, with her, may recognise the approach of such an hour.

OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

There is an hour coming, it is all gathering for a crisis. Signs and omens speak on every side, a change is at hand, a fresh epoch is opening, a creative process is at work. And any such momentous hour must be an hour for Christ. We must decide a new stage in His work upon mankind, we must determine the set of the currents of His redemptive influence. Christ will strike out the channels down which His grace will operate afresh upon the social hopes and personal needs that will come to their birth. It is an hour of His that is at hand, that is at the door, that is arriving to shake the earth.

CANON SCOTT HOLLAND.

Faith and Understanding.

His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.
S. JOHN ii. 5.

THERE were several eras in the life of S. Mary as related to her Son. There was the time when she held Him an infant, like any other, in her arms, and pondered all the strange words and visions that had attended His birth. There was a time, after a sweet and gracious childhood, when Jesus passed out of her life, and found His way into the larger life for which God had sent Him into the world—a painful period to her, for her child seemed no longer her own. 'Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us?'—a question the painful perplexity of which was hardly lessened by its answer: 'Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house and about His business?' It was good to see her child so pious, but it was hard to feel that He no longer wholly belonged to her, and that He had found a world of His own. She could not follow her Son in all the marvellous exercises of His spirit; she could not understand Him; but she could trust Him. Where there was such reality there could be no vanity; where there was such accord between life and duty there was little danger of mistake; where there was a conscience so unerring, a heart so true and humble, an eye so single, a judgment so infallible, a will so firm yet so docile—there was small danger of rash or unmeaning conduct, little probability but that whatever He might do would have a good reason and purpose in it. When, therefore, the wine at the wedding feast failed, and Mary appealed to her Son for help, and was, in a certain sense, repulsed—not harshly, but under the deepening sense of divine power that was pressing in upon Him—'I will help, but not in your way; I must now, indeed, be about My Father's business; when the hour comes I will help, not as the son of Mary—

what have I to do with thee in this matter?—but in another way with which you can have nothing to do.' When she heard these words she refrained from pressing her need upon Him in her own way, and said to the servants, 'Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. I do not know what He will do, but He will do something. All we need do is to obey His word.' Had she been a philosopher she might have said: 'He is always transcending my thought and word; always finding a divine meaning in everything; always seems to be thinking outside of this world; always acts in the way least expected; so now I trust Him to bring us out of this trouble in His own way. Do whatsoever He says.' Beautiful picture of obedient faith! Without reason, except one best all-sufficing reason; self and self's ways set aside; the whole anxious troublesome matter passed over without question into the hands of another, sure that goodness can be trusted—this is faith, indeed!

I. Trust the clear word of God. It is often a good thing to throw ourselves upon the simple word of Christ without trying to understand the reason or the why of it. If, in any way, God makes known His will, if any duty is clearly indicated, we are to do it without any reference to the reason of it. We have enough to go upon if we know that it is God's will. I do not deny that it is desirable to understand the reason of a required action, and to see it in all its bearings and effects. The action of the reason should never be set aside. Man travels easiest and swiftest in a path made straight and plain by knowledge. The student does best when he knows why and how; study strengthens the mind and fits him for labour. I can more easily and fully obey any command of God when I can see and feel the force of the eternal reason behind it. But it is a mistake to insist upon seeing it. While a critical and inquiring mind is a good thing, there is another habit of mind—closely akin—which is most undesirable.

There is little that we learn in this world by thought and study. We thus accumulate knowledge, which is something quite different from knowing. We know love by loving, hope by hoping; we enter into a relation with a very little knowledge of it, and come to understand it by an experience of it. Life is real, and it must be lived out before its secret is discovered. You cannot cheat it of its process by any probing and testing beforehand. You must take it on trust—take its duties on trust; whatsoever we are told to do we must do it, and wait for the issue to justify us. This is not only the truer and wiser way, but it is the more comfortable and happy way. Most of us tire at last of trying to comprehend life and solve its problems; we tire of this endless and vain interrogation—Why? Why is this and that so? We only uncover a deeper problem, and,

if we succeed in solving that, another and another awaits us, each deeper and darker and vaster, till at last no answers come back. The finite plummet cannot measure infinity. The finite ear cannot hear the answer of eternity. We tire of trying to find out how our lives and wills are related to the will of God as it 'moves on' its 'undisturbed affairs,' and we fall back on simple duty, doing the thing we know to be right, as, after all, the wiser and happier way of living.

II. There is hardly anything that most of us need more than to get our daily tasks into the shape of duty done trustfully and hopefully under God. For most, the labours of life are drudgery; hard, heavy toil, early and late; lifting burdens, going through the same wearying routine behind a counter or over books, rasped by close contact with the coarse and evil and weak side of human nature, bearing the sweet but tiresome burdens of family life—constant care for little children, imprisoned willingly, and yet wearisomely, within the walls of home; work and care, care and work, year after year, often uncongenial, often unremunerative—such is the life of most of us. What we need is in some way to get to feel that in all this we are doing God's will, and trust in Him for the larger meaning and use there may be in these toils. When the servants at Cana were getting the water-pots together and filling them with water, they little knew what they were doing, except that they were doing what they were bid. But, doing that cheerfully, trustfully, sure that something good would come of it, they were all ready for the unexpected outcome, and to perceive the glory that soon shone around them when their implicit obedience was justified. I think we may take the same view of our lives. I mean that we may accept these drudging toils, these cares, these details, this dull routine, as imposed by God, and may fulfil them in a spirit of trust and glad obedience.

III. God speaks to us in many ways. There is the revealed word, the word written on the heart, the voice of conscience, the common consent of mankind. There are also special revelations and voices. Those who have ears to hear will always be hearing God's voice. There come to us all hours which we may well call hours of revelation. They often come after great sorrow, or when in the midst of sore perplexity, or after some experience of humiliation or disappointment, during convalescence after illness, or in some deliverance like the spared life of wife or child, or after great weariness, or when in some deep solitude of forest or city. Oftenest, perhaps, they come in the night and after deep sleep. The Spirit of God comes to us. You will gain and do more in these moments than in years of ordinary life. 'Spread wide the skirts of thy mantle when the heavens rain gold.' The heavenly visitation may be long in repeating itself. There is a fable of one who waited and watched at

the gate of Paradise for a thousand years, but slept a moment when the gate was opened and shut again for ages. There is constancy in the divine character, but not in the divine opportunity. The Spirit is always in the world, but it cannot always find access to us. When it does—quickening, opening, pointing—then we are to transact the soul's business; repent, choose, decide, and take our course.

T. T. MUNGER.

Biding our Time.

Mine hour is not yet come. S. John ii. 5.

IT is not always from the most prominent actions of good men's lives, from those which shine before the world with most attractive brilliancy, that we learn to know them best. On the contrary, the greatest men have never appeared so great as when the veil of privacy has been suddenly raised, and we have caught a glimpse of their home life, or seen self-denial, gentleness, honesty of purpose, exhibited in everyday circumstances or trivial details, without the spur of public applause. And when some leader of men has passed from our midst, and we run over in our memory his wise words and noble deeds, we do not recall his achievements before the world as affording the surest proof of his real greatness; we rather dwell on some trifling circumstance, some instance of forbearance under bitter provocation, some act of magnanimity when the injurer was in his hand, some outpouring of a charitable spirit, some indignant rebuke of a malicious tongue, some sign of innate purity and truthfulness which was in perfect harmony with his whole life.

It is most edifying to study the life of our Lord in this light from beginning to end. The little incident before us supplies the clew to much that He did, and much that He did not do. It gives a key to the vast success of His ministrations. His life was not glorious as the world counts glory, but its goodness was eminently practical, and therefore eminently successful. It is this side of His character upon which we are most inclined to dwell. We do not turn to His power, His eloquence, or His wisdom, but to His goodness; and not to His goodness in the abstract so much, as His goodness combined in word and action with gentleness and tact, with moderation, modesty, and forbearance. It is this union which gives the enduring character to our Lord's life, and makes His example to this day effective.

Look at the lesson of human conduct which lies in His withholding the exercise of His power till the time had come. 'Mine hour is not yet come.' No; and until this moment arrived, He appeared

just as one of the other guests. With full consciousness of the possession of divine power, He allowed Himself to be considered as any other man. What greatness there is here!

Let me illustrate the value of this lesson, first, in our religious efforts; and, secondly, in our domestic intercourse.

I. All thoughtful persons must be at times astonished at the absence of this divine characteristic which is conspicuous in the conduct of many men and women of exemplary life and intentions. The latter seem to think, that so long as they follow any course of which their conscience approves, it matters little how it is pursued, or with what violence to other men's ideas it is urged. They do not pause to consider how untimely may be the expression of their convictions, how distasteful their sentiments to the habits and practice of their audience, how ill selected the occasion on which they determine to propagate their opinions. 'It matters little,' say they. To such persons the prudence of others seems a cloak for timidity; their moderation only another name for indifference; their tact an excuse for a time-serving spirit. Yet our Lord was ever considerate for others, ever gentle in His rebukes, even when brought face to face with sinners; studious to seek fitting occasions for His speech; careful to avoid unnecessary obstacles; watchful for opportunities; adapting His address to His audience: exercising all that prudent care, without which even His influence must necessarily fail to effect His purpose; striving to win His people's hearts, whilst He sought to improve their morals, remove their prejudices, or reform and elevate their lives. Ah, how much better should we all do the work which we have undertaken, what heart-burnings and bitterness should we avoid, if we walked in His steps; if we strove to imitate His tact and consideration for weaknesses and prejudices; if, in all we have to do, we remembered that our Blessed Lord ever acted upon the principle, that there is a time for all things, a time to speak and a time to be silent, a time to put forth power and a time to repress it, an hour for sitting still and an hour for taking action.

II. If, however, we need tact and prudence in our public religious efforts, we need them even more in our daily contact with men in private and domestic life. Here indeed our failures are most conspicuous and most frequent; and here, in the house of intimate friends, our Lord meets us with His example. Have you fault to find with others? Take care how you find it, lest it should appear that you are more concerned for your own satisfaction than for the improvement of those you blame. With humility as the foundation on which he builds, and the desire to be Christlike as his chief aim, what is there that man cannot become by the help of the Spirit of God? There are many whom it has made to be the pride and

honour of their friends, shining lights to all that sit in darkness, standing rebukes to the evil, the solace of those that are in sorrow, the strength and support of the weak and erring. The path to such a glorious position lies open before us all.

CANON PROTHERO.

Christian Generosity.

Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. S. JOHN ii. 10.

AT least there is an honour and generosity in this, in which religion contrasts well with the ways of the world. It was a mean thing to let the wine intentionally deteriorate. Truth never does that. It never takes advantages; it never goes on the principle, 'Anything will do for that man.' There is always a largeness, there is always an honesty, in Christ's dealings with us. 'If it were not so, He would have told us,' is the characteristic of all He does. Take care that you are like Him, in being above all littlenesses, all false services, all tricks of economy, all shabby artifice. Let your openness, and your manliness, and your good-heartedness give people always occasion to see your higher level in common things, and to admire the gospel in you. It is not a little thing when a man of the world has to say to a Christian, 'Every man does so, *but thou*'—

Whether the ruler of the feast saw it or not, there was much more in his words than this.

I. The presence of our Lord at the marriage feast at all was a very wonderful fact of His ministry. He never married; of course, He could not. Therefore, the rather that He might put honour upon marriage, He elected to perform His first miracle at a wedding banquet. It illustrated, too, at once the highest order of sympathy. 'He was a man of sorrows.' To feel with any sorrow, therefore, would not be so very strange; we may say, in a sense, it would not be so very remarkable. But when we are very low down in depression, to sympathise, not in feeling only, and sentiment, but practically, in our manner, in our look, in our words, in our deeds, with what is glad and joyous and festive, this is the hardest thing in the world. This shows a mind best kept and disciplined, for it is the most unselfish thing a man ever does. Whoever has tried it, knows how much more difficult it is to rise to sympathise with the happy than it is to go down to sympathise with the miserable.

And yet it is one of the greatest lessons of life. It is generally the sympathy which a man has with child. It is the sympathy of a chastened soul with a thoughtless world. It is the sympathy of a

great mind with a common one. It is the sympathy of earth with heaven. It is the sympathy we have with a departing saint. It is the sympathy which makes the solace of all bereavement,—the thought familiarised almost to vulgarity, but which can never lose its power, or its beauty, or its truth, even though it clothe itself in those common words,—'It is my loss, but it is his gain.'

Cultivate sympathy with the happy. It will be a very different thing from what you expected it to be; it will be a much severer exercise; but it will be a blessed antidote to all jealousy, to all murmurs, to all inequalities, to almost all separation, and to quite all death.

When Jesus would make 'wine,' He did not create it,—of course He could,—but God seldom, I may say, God now never, properly speaking, does create,—He made it; *i.e.* He took the material which was to hand, and by moulding the old, created the new. He made, just as God did when He used the pre-existing dust to make Adam,—He made 'water' *wine.*

II. Look at the fact of increase and the amelioration of everything which really comes from God.

Of the essential diminution and gradual deterioration of everything which is not of God, I need scarcely speak. What has no principle of eternity in it, can have no sustaining power, therefore it must run down. While with the believer, what was 'water' grows to be 'wine;' with the world, what was 'wine' passes into 'water.'

It is a poor exchange with many, when the heedlessness of a playful childhood passes into the gaiety of a dissipated youth. And it is all downward again, when the young man's pleasures become a habit without the zest, and only go to make the monotony of a middle, selfish life! But what, when the pageant of the external passes away from it, as it must, and the power of indulgence ceases, and the excitement of a worldly life sinks down into the restlessness of a disappointed old man? And what,—one step more, when the cup of life is at its dregs, and there is no sweetness in it, and no hope at the last? How bitter, how very bitter has that man's wine of life been to him!

We all have felt how the garish colouring of pleasure fades out, and how things which have no depth in them, grow less and less; first powerless, then indifferent, then distasteful, then wearisome, then a burden. The appetite weakens; the things which pleased it clog it, we season with a stronger stimulant; and the re-action is apathy; till we sink down to a lower range; we take up the things which we once despised, and, by a rapid succession, it goes on and on, to that which is worse, that which is worst!

But, it is not thus with holy things. Christ always adds; He has always something in reserve beyond what you have. Be you as

happy as happy can be, there is something beyond it, and when you get up there, there will be something beyond it, and when you are there, there will be something beyond it, for ever and for ever.

III. It is a real happiness which a man feels, though he does not know it, real 'wine' of the true vine, when he has his first, deep, melting conviction of sin. But the happiness is greater, the 'wine' is stronger, when God gives the blessed assurance of a full forgiveness. And stronger and better yet, when, in that constraining sense of God's love he goes out to a holy, happy, useful life. Not less strong, but stronger next when those active joys are turned to some passive bliss in a quiet room, in some still meditative hour. Yet on and on, the strength and the ripeness grows, when that joy, mixing with a deepening humility, settles down into a mellowed thoughtfulness. And purer, holier, and intenser still, when that peace takes the stamp of the future, and all heaven rises with the delight of life's last thought.

You may have a joyous childhood, but if you love God, never believe those who tell you that you will have a less happy manhood. For to tell a little child that he will be less happy when he is a man, is to contradict God's ordinances.

Or you may be a man in the delight of the results of a useful, and an important and an honoured existence. Still, impotent of all active service, you need not be afraid of old age. He will not decrease to you, nor decrease in you, when you are old. He will be nearer to you in that weak solitude of old age than ever He was in the crowd of that middle life. 'The latter end will greatly increase.'

For I am quite sure that God is a parent who has treasured blessings for His child, which He keeps back till some hour when that child specially needs them; and then, and not till then, He unlocks that treasure. So that there is a continual 'until now.' And as we go on from stage to stage, and most of all, when other things are failing us, and life grows dull, a new light shining into the heart, or some new kind providence, or some new token given us, or some increase of old feelings, or some manifestation of the unseen world, more vivid than before, is as 'new wine' poured into the mantling cup, and we can only marvel and say, 'Thou hast kept this until now.'

Do you act towards Christ just as He acts towards you? Take care that 'the wine' of your affection to Him never gets weaker; but let the last be always better than the first!

Live each day that, if it be the last, it may so exceed all that have gone before it, that God Himself may bear His approving testimony to that day, and say, 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now.'

JAMES VAUGHAN.

OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

The Wine of Christ's Giving.

Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine: and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now. S. JOHN ii. 10.

THESE words, spoken almost in jest over the table at a feast, are recorded by S. John partly, no doubt, as proving the truth of the miracle that the water was not only made wine, but better wine than they had ever yet tasted; partly as showing how quietly it was done, without notice from the guests, who thought that the bridegroom had only sent for more wine from his own store; but also, and perhaps chiefly, because they point to one of the many spiritual lessons of the miracle itself.

The miracle was a miracle of gladness. It has been noticed that almost the first of Moses's miracles was to turn water into blood as a sign of God's anger; the first of Jesus's miracles was to turn it into wine that maketh glad the heart of man. And it was done at a marriage, the time when gladness is at the highest and the holiest that any pleasure of this world can be. It seemed that even before the Lord sanctified pain and sorrow by sharing it, He chose to sanctify the human happiness, of which on earth he took so little, by His presence and His help. As our Lord's presence at the wedding has always been held to sanctify holy matrimony, and give a blessing on it above the first blessing given to Adam and Eve, so that marriage between Christians has, as S. Paul says, a mystical and sacramental virtue, and secures to them a more than earthly happiness—so His presence at the feast may be taken as a blessing on human pleasure and cheerfulness of whatever kind. And in the text we learn how the work of Jesus is the elevating and purifying of all our pleasures.

I. 'Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine.' It is very easy to say that there is no pleasure to be got from the world; that a man can never be happy without the fear of God; that he must always be uneasy when he has not a good conscience; that no one is truly at peace and contented with himself but the true Christian, who has the peace that passeth all understanding. It is very easy to say; but preachers say it more because they wish it to be believed than because it is true, or even because they themselves believe it. So many men would not run after the world and the things of the world if it were true that the world gave no pleasure. Very likely the world promises more pleasure than it can give; very likely the things that seem pleasant beforehand are in reality disappointing and unsatisfying; but still it is possible to get very real pleasure from it for a time. But, though it is not true that the

world can give no pleasure, it is true that it can give no final satisfaction. Sooner or later man gets too tired of worldly pleasure or worldly prosperity, or comes to feel too much of worldly sorrow and misfortune, to be really contented with the world. 'Lord, Thou hast made us for Thyself,' says a saint, 'and our heart has no rest until it finds its rest in Thee;' the heart can please itself, can amuse itself, can enjoy itself for a long time in the world, but it can find no final rest but in God. Though a man should have all the pleasure, all the power, all the wisdom even in the world, he would wish for something more, he would not be content with all. Solomon had all, and his mighty spirit found no rest until he came back to the simple, commonplace religion of his childhood, and settled that the conclusion of the whole matter—of his varied studies, of his enormous experience, of his profound speculations—was that reached by so many Israelites without guile, though without one-thousandth part of Solomon's wisdom: 'fear God, and keep His commandments, for that is the whole duty of man.' Unless men will rest in this, they drink too much of the world's best wine, until it is all gone. Men want, according to the proverb, better bread than is made of wheat, sweeter wine than is pressed from grapes; it is right that they should want it. They are made in the image of the Infinite God, and therefore the desires of their souls are infinite; and if they will not come to God for His drink, His blood, which is love incorruptible and life ever-flowing, they will have to take to worse wine for want of the good.

II. But it is otherwise with those who have Jesus with them at their table. While the world's wine lasts He will not speak; be it good or bad, He lets men drink it as it comes. Those who drink too deeply of it will have no taste or thirst for better, while they will come to a burning and a craving that makes them drink worse; but those who so taste of it as men will who value His presence and His disciples', He will not bid to abstain. Only when the time comes, as come it will, when the wine fails, then Jesus's hour is come, and then His voice is heard, then His gift is made known. When earthly happiness is dashed by trouble from without, when hopes are disappointed, and wise plans fail, and right actions bear no fruit, and good intentions turn out ill; or when the evil days come and the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, 'I have no pleasure in them,'—the days of sickness, or distress, or old age, or approaching death,—then it is known whether Jesus is in the house or not. If He is there, He will bring a new blessing in the place of the old, to which the old was as nothing; a wine that does make glad the heart indeed, so that whatever was drunk before it, men shall say that He has kept the good wine until now.

III. And not only at the first time when the want is felt: Jesus is always the same. Wine enough to fill one of the six water-pots would have been quite enough to have lasted for the needs of the wedding feast; but Jesus's gifts were large and royal, and He would leave a good store in the house of the bridegroom, who had honoured Him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart. And so in His dealings with the soul that honours Him above the world; it is not only that He is ready to comfort it in the time of sorrow, or to open a new source of delight when the pleasures of the world begin to fail. His blessing is not exhausted with the first using; it abides for ever in the house that is worthy of it. And not only abides, but grows stronger and sweeter as time goes on, so that at every fresh grace, every fresh mercy, every fresh comfort, however deep the soul may have drunk of God's delights, he may yet say to the heavenly Bridegroom, 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now.'

G. H. SIMCOX.

IV. OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS.

The Great Proclamation.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Isaiah lv. 1.

NOTICE.—I. To whom this offer is made.

It is to every one thirsty and penniless. That is a melancholy combination, to be needing something infinitely, and to have not a farthing to get it with. But that is the condition in which we all stand, in regard of the highest and best things. For this invitation of my text is as universal as if it had stopped with its third word. 'Ho, every one,' would have been no broader than is the offer as it stands. For the characteristics named are those which belong, necessarily and universally, to human experience. If my text had said, 'Ho, every one that breathes the human breath,' it would not have more completely covered the whole race, and enfolded thee and me, and all our brethren, in the amplitude of its promise, than it does when it sets up as the sole qualifications, thirst and penury—that we infinitely need and that we are absolutely unable to acquire the blessings that it offers.

'Every one that thirsteth.' That means desire. Yes; but it means need also. And what is every man but a great bundle of yearnings and necessities? None of us carry within ourselves that which suffices for ourselves. We are all dependent upon external things for being and for well-being.

There are thirsts which infallibly point to their true objects. If a man is hungry he knows that it is food that he wants. We have social instincts; we need love; we need friendship; we need somebody to lean upon; we thirst for some heart to rest our heads upon, for hands to clasp ours; and we know where the creatures and the objects are that will satisfy these desires. And there are the higher thirsts of the spirit, that 'follows knowledge, like a sinking star, beyond the farthest bounds of human thought;' and a man knows where and how to gratify the impulse that drives him to seek after some forms of knowledge and wisdom.

But besides all these, besides sense, besides affection, besides emotions, besides the intellectual spur of which we are all more or less conscious, there come in a whole set of other thirsts that do not in themselves carry the intimation of the place where they can be slaked. There are thirsts that some of us know not where to satisfy; and so we have parched lips and swollen tongues and raging desires that earth can give nothing to fill.

And yet there are no desires so dormant but that their being ungratified makes a man restless. You do not want forgiveness, but you will never be happy till you get it. You do not want to be good and true and holy men, but you will never be blessed till you are. You do not want God, some of you, but you will be restless till you find Him. You fancy you want heaven when you are dead; you do not want it when you are living. But until your earthly life is like the life of Jesus Christ in heaven, even whilst you are on earth you will never be at rest.

'Ho, every one that thirsteth.' That designation includes us all. 'And he that hath no money.' Who has any? Notice that the persons represented in our text as penniless are, in the next verse, remonstrated with for spending 'money.' So then the penniless man had some pence away in some corner of his pocket which he could spend. He had the money that would buy shams, 'that which is not bread' but a stone though it looks like a loaf, but he had no money for the true thing. Which being translated out of parable into fact, is simply this, that our efforts may and do win for us the lower satisfactions which meet our transitory and superficial necessities, but that no effort of ours can secure for us the loftier blessings which slake the diviner thirsts of immortal souls. A man lands in a far country with English shillings in his pocket, but he finds no coins

go there but thalers, or francs, or dollars, or the like; and his money is only current in his own land, and he has to get it changed before he can make his purchases. So, with a pocketful of it, he may as well be penniless.

And, in like fashion, with all our strenuous efforts, which we are bound to make, and which there is joy in making, after these lower things that correspond to our efforts, we find that we have no coinage that will buy the good things of the Kingdom of Heaven, without which we faint and die. Those who realise more deeply what the significance of sin is, and what the eternal operation of its consequences upon the soul is, and what the awful majesty of a divine righteousness is, learn that the man who has sinned cannot, by anything that he can do, obliterate that awful fact, or reduce it to insignificance, in its influence on the divine relations to him. It is only God that can do that. We have no money.

II. In what it consists.

They tell an old story about the rejoicings at the coronation of some great king, when there was set up in the market-place a triple fountain, from each of whose three lips flowed a different kind of rare liquor, which any man who chose to bring a pitcher might fill from at his choice. Notice my text, 'Come ye to the waters' . . . 'buy wine and milk.' The great fountain is set up in the market-place of the world, and every man may come; and whichever of this glorious trinity of effluents he needs most, there his lip may glue itself and there it may drink, be it 'water' that refreshes, or 'wine' that gladdens, or 'milk' that nourishes. They are all contained in this one great gift that flows out from the deep heart of God to the thirsty lips of parched humanity.

And what does that mean? Well, we may say, salvation; or we may use many other words to define the nature of the gifts. I venture to take a shorter one, and say, it means Christ. He, and not merely some truth about Him and His work; He Himself, in the fulness of His being, in the all-sufficiency of His love, in the reality of His presence, in the power of His sacrifice, in the daily derivation into the heart that waits upon Him, of His life and His spirit, He is the all-sufficient supply of every thirst of every human soul. Christ is all, and the soul that has Him shall never thirst.

III. Lastly, how do we get the gifts.

The paradox of my text needs little explanation, 'Buy without money and without price.' The contradiction on the surface is but intended to make emphatic this blessed truth, that the only conditions are a sense of need, and a willingness to take—nothing else, and nothing more. We must recognise our penury, and must abandon self, and put away all ideas of having a finger in our own salvation,

and be willing—which, strangely and sadly enough, many of us are not—willing to be obliged to God's unhelped and undeserved love for all. A. MACLAREN.

The Word of God.

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. ISAIAH lv. 11.

A TWOFOLD subject of meditation is presented by this passage; first, the word of God considered as the ordained instrument of our conversion; secondly, the predicted success of the word when earnestly and faithfully set forth.

I. Notice first the word of God considered as the ordained instrument both of our conversion and of the spiritual fruitfulness which shall follow. 'So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth.' The passages are neither few nor of doubtful import which connect all the spiritual effects or changes wrought in us with the agency of the word of God. It is found as a matter of fact that it is the faithful preaching of the word which converts souls. It is found as a matter of fact that when God intends to bring sinners to Himself He commonly does it by means of that sword of the Spirit, the word of God. And it is further found as a matter of fact that as Christians grow in a spiritual understanding of the word they also grow in grace, and in all the higher attainments of the Christian life. Almost all error begins in attempts to damage the prerogative of the word of God. The great battle of our day is the battle of the Bible, and because there is an acknowledged difficulty in explaining inspiration as a theory men are trying all they can to get rid of it as a fact.

II. Notice further the predicted success of the Word of God. 'It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please.' Of this as a general statement it can hardly be necessary to adduce proof. The Acts of the Apostles throughout may be regarded as a recital of the triumphs of the Word, a continuous comment on that text, 'So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.' But though this might satisfy the general conditions of a foretold success as contained in this passage, there are some particular expressions in it which deserve notice. Thus it is said, 'My word shall not return unto me void.' Does the word of God, then, never fail of producing some saving effect? Or if the only effect it does produce is that of deepening the condemnation of those who hear it, can it be of this effect that God is speaking when He says,

'It shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it'?

Now the better to answer these questions we must look at the connection of the passage, and especially at the illustration of falling rain upon which the statement we are considering is based. And the statement there is, that the word is no more preached in vain than the rain could fall in vain. Now with regard to the rain, as intimated already, we are never presumptuous enough to affirm that it descends uselessly, or that the whole creation of God considered it ever descends to our hurt. There is a design in every drop of rain that falls, whether it settle in the cavities of the barren rock, or be absorbed into the sands of the arid waste, or add its puny contingent to the waters of the great deep. Drop as it may be it is yet a beneficent and an important drop, and falls into its place among the train of indefinite and untraced causations of which the benefit may not be experienced till after many days, and the mode of effecting the benefit may never be known at all. 'So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth,' saith the Lord. It may be as a drop on the rock or as a snowflake upon the waters, but it has its mission. From the moment of its utterance it is gathered up into a scheme of beneficent and fertilising agencies, bearing its ordained and determinate part in the planting and watering of that universal paradise, when 'instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree,' when 'the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.'

So much for the first part of this predicted success. It affirms that the word not only shall not be effectless, but that eventually it shall adduce to good. Not only is it not void of purpose, but it shall not return void of blessing. This view is meant to encourage. It teaches that the word spoken by us, besides being incorporated into the magnificent maxims of an everlasting purpose, besides having a life which shall long outlive our life, has its seed of vitality in itself, and may spring up anywhere or at any time we know not how.

Still in individual cases the word may return void, or rather worse than void, because if rejected or not received aright it must aggravate condemnation, must swell responsibility, must convert the fragrant aroma of life and immortality into a savour of death unto death. Can it be of this result that the Most High God speaks when He says, 'My word shall accomplish that which I please, and shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it'? Only with certain understood limitations can we affirm this. Of course, as a result of preordaining and permitting power, everything which happens,

whether good or evil, must accomplish that which God pleases, can accomplish nothing else, and in that sense and in relation to some indefinitely extended scheme of moral government it is true that, even when adding to the sinner's condemnation, the word is prospering in the thing whereto He sent it. But still that is not the chief scope of the text, which is rather this, that the word of God is furnished with means for reaching men's souls for their good, and can only fail to reach them through some fault or abuse or voluntary obstruction on their own part. It is 'the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth,' but 'unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth' it is through no fault of the word, through no fault of him that preaches the word, the power of God unto condemnation. What is implied in the text is that the word is given for our salvation, is exactly adapted to promote our salvation, and, if we will not oppose ourselves to the beneficent design, shall certainly accomplish our salvation.

The practical lesson of our subject is that we be careful not to throw hindrances in the way of God's work, that we do not by any cherished habits of heart or life hinder the word from prospering in the thing whereto God hath sent it. It will be one of our wonders in heaven, one for which the God of all grace shall be for ever glorified by us, how slow we were to receive the word, how often and how foolishly we put it away from us, how long and tenderly His blessed Spirit strove with us, as if to the very verge of our moral liberty He would make His word accomplish that which He pleases, that which He designed,—our conviction, our conversion, our sanctification, our glory.

D. MOORE.

The Eternal and His Habitations.

For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose Name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. ISAIAH lvii. 15.

THE God of the Hebrews, it is sometimes said, was tribal only, and had all the limitations of the hard, narrow, unsympathetic race of which He was the imaginary patron. Such a contention is sufficiently refuted by the words before us. With the broadening ages the perfect meaning and music of these words only becomes more significant and impressive. We are now more or less familiar with an arithmetic of the years that would have bewildered the brain of Solomon. In face of some of the numbers with which our mathematicians deal, he would have felt himself little better than a

savage who can count up only to the sum of the fingers on one hand. Astronomers have given us entirely new conceptions of space and magnitude. In comparison with the modern conception of the universe, that of the wisest thinkers of antiquity was a mere cell. In all the countries touched by the Christian faith a loftier standard of morality has arisen, and manners and customs have been strangely softened and refined. And yet it would be impossible to surpass the sublimity, the penetration, the tenderness of the prophet's conception now that science has so vastly expanded our ideas of time, and pushed out almost to infinitude the boundaries of space, and love has seen a new day arise in the redeeming love of the great Son of God.

We have here three inhabitations that lie within and round about each other like concentric circles. I. *God's inhabitation of infinite time* is announced. 'He inhabiteth eternity.' That rests upon the essential properties of an unbegotten being. II. *We are reminded of His inhabitation of selected space.* 'I dwell in the high and holy place.' That rests upon His free elective affinities. III. We are assured of *the mystery of His inhabitation of broken and lowly hearts.* 'With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.' That rests upon His pure compassion.

I. The first great theme of meditation the text brings before us is *God's inhabitation of infinite time.*

To help us to get out of ourselves and away from the puny standards of our hand-breadth life, let us think of the periods marked out for us by the events of human history. It is a very little fragment of the sum-total of that history which one life can touch. Memorial arches are sometimes to be seen in China erected to virtuous old men, favourites of Providence, of whom it is said that they had the privilege of seeing five generations of descendants dwelling under the same roof with them. Perhaps eighty or ninety years before that, they had been the youngest representatives of a similar series of generations. And yet even in this indirect way one of these venerable men would scarcely touch a century on each side of him, and he would have an active interest only in the few events of the sum-total that were nearest his own time. Nominally he is the connecting link between two whole centuries, but yet how little does it really mean!

The late Mr. Proctor said the planets were like a group of human beings in different stages of growth and development. Some of them were probably in their babyhood, and not yet ripe for the life-bearing destinies that might probably be before them. Others, such as our earth, were in their very prime and maturity. And other of the planets had already passed through babyhood,

youth, and maturity, and had entered upon a useless and decrepit old age. They were barren, played-out, infertile, and had been so for hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of years. And the planetary system is one of myriads of similar systems, some of which may have been contemporaneous, and some of which may have existed in succession to each other; and the solar system may be a mere mushroom growth of the night, a Jonah's gourd in comparison with the more patriarchal groups of the firmament. What a term of measurement does that give us! The life of the entire stellar universe, however, is but the throb of the seconds-hand on the dial that measures out God's everlasting days.

God fills the illimitable time which is to be with the glory of His presence just as completely as that which is already past. 'From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.'

These words do far more than barely assert that God has an unbegotten and an interminable life. Not only has He lived through these epochs of unthinkable immensity, He has also vitalised them with the glory of His presence, filling their expanse with His own blessed plenitude of wisdom and sympathy and strength. In every epoch of time He moves as freely and familiarly as we move in the little round of our daily lot. These stretches of mysterious time are strange, terrifying, unknown to us, but He is at home there, for they are the realms He inhabits and possesses and informs, and if we make God our Friend we shall one day be at home there likewise. He is the King of eternity, pervading the dominion of boundless time with the potencies of His attributes, controlling their issues and their outworkings, and making the whole tremulous with the forces of His sacred personality.

It was once supposed that the dark patch in the heavens called the Magellan clouds was starless, an enigma of vacancy in the glittering skies. That idea is given up now, although the particular portion of the heavens to which the name is applied is not so rich in stars as the other parts. In all eternity past there is no vacant century, no unpeopled epoch, no barren, unillumined, God-lacking millennium. He fills immeasurable time to its utmost dimension, every moment of the vast eternity, past and to be, pulsating with God's conscious presence.

II. We are reminded of *God's inhabitation of selected space.* I dwell in the high and holy place.' God presents Himself to us in these words as a Being who brings His noblest attributes within space-limits because the dwellers in the high and holy place with whom He communes are beings to whom space-limits attach. And thus we see the force in the Psalmist's declaration when he asserts that God 'humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in *heaven.*'

It is an act of condescension to pass, if we may be allowed the licence of the expression, out of His own essential infinite into the sublimest associations of finite life.

God dwells here with an *express and intentional manifestation* wanting in those extensions of His wisdom and power which touch every part of the universe alike. God is present, but not equally present and unveiled in all the orbs of the firmament. There are elect realms in which He vouchsafes peculiar epiphanies of His majesty and spiritual perfection. Be deaf to that philosophic Pantheism which laughs at the idea of a heaven filled with the glory of God's immediate presence, and insists upon the dogma that God pervades all parts of the universe alike, and that the throb of His life admits of no degrees.

The full-orbed splendour of the Most High can never be known outside the limits of the high and holy place. It is true 'heaven and earth are full of His glory,' but earth redolent with the incense of the sweetest springtides, dainty with the flowers that bloom only in the steps of the King, overarched with those glowing canopies of cloud His own skill spreads forth, consecrated by the most overwhelming theophanies He has ever vouchsafed to mortals, earth is but 'His footstool' whilst heaven is 'His throne.' 'I dwell in the high and holy place.'

III. God's inhabitation of *the individual hearts of His contrite ones is declared.* This rests upon His pure compassion. 'With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.' The words suggest a contrast with the preceding inhabitations. Not only does He stoop to the finite that is holy, but also to the finite that is frail, 'He humbleth Himself to behold the things which are in heaven,' and incomparably more marvellous still, 'the things that are on earth.' 'He is exalted far above all heavens, yet hath He respect unto the lowly,' coming near to direct and purify and establish the hearts that have been seared and blackened with sin, if such hearts do but tremble at His judgments.

In the first pang of sorrow, in the first blush of shame, in the cry of relenting that comes up out of the discords of human rebellion, in the bitter sense of weakness, frailty, failure, God comes near and possesses the heart with His healing love as expressly as He fills the high and holy place. If you are poor in spirit, humble, abject, expect His instant indwelling. He comes to the penitent man or woman who mourns apart as well as to the collective Israel.

Remember what a sacred thing contrition is. God broods in its earliest forms. Do not despise it either in yourselves or others. Never say it is unmanly vacillation as you see how mistaken you have been, and confess for the hundredth time the sin that still

cleaves to you. All this is the first step of a process that culminates in the enthronement of God within you, and heralds a new advent. When you see a child of man, however abject, humbled under chastisement, admitting the bitterness of sin, showing some faint solicitation of divine things, wanting to be better, remember all that veils the very presence which abashes angels. In seeking to foster the contrition of the guiltiest you are dealing with holy things. God is as truly present in the first sigh, in the speechless sin-forsaking vow, in the home-look of the prodigal, as before the mercy-seat. He comes to religious life in its lowliest forms. 'We are saved by faith,' but the presence that makes faith saving enters the opening heart long before penitence has matured into faith. You have not to wait for an afflatus of divine power which will make your faith saving. If you mourn for sin God is with and in you, and the faith you put forth will be God-helped. T. G. SELBY.

God's Two Homes.

For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose Name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before Me, and the souls which I have made. ISAIAH lvii. 15, 16.

WE know and believe separately the doctrines of the majesty and of the mercy of God: but it probably seldom occurs to a Christian to think of one as a result of the other. We say that God forgives us our sins because Christ died for us; or if we go further back, and give an account of the coming and the redemption of Christ, we say that He came because of the love of God, both of the Father and of the Son, for the men whom He had made, and who needed His help. It would not occur to us to say that God sent His Son into the world because He is almighty and infinite, and all-glorious, or that Jesus came to save us because He is the eternal God.

Yet this, or something very like it, is what Isaiah does say in the text. The former verse gives a double description of God's nature and attributes, as combining majesty and mercy, so that He is equally at home in both. Self-centred, self-existing, self-contained, self-content, dwelling in His own eternity, in His own self-satisfying perfection, what need has He of any one of His creatures to dwell with Him? what right have they to expect Him to dwell with any of them? They dwell in Him: 'In Him we live and move and have our being;' but to dwell with Him, to be beside Him, outside His

being, yet not cast away from His presence—that is, one would think, impossible for a creature. But behold, He tells us, not only that He inhabiteth eternity, not only that He dwells in the high and holy place, but 'with him also.' With whom? With the man in whom His Spirit dwells, who has walked before Him with a perfect heart, who has kept His law and not transgressed at any time His commandments? No—'with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.' Those who are low in God's creation and know it, those who are sinful in themselves and feel it, those whose hearts are broken with the knowledge of what they are—it is to them that He gives this closeness of habitation, this full knowledge of what He is.

I. I do not wish to say very much now of the means by which, as we all know from the gospel, it has been fulfilled which was promised, that the Tabernacle of God shall be with men, and He shall dwell with them; how the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory; how Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, came to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Isaiah, who says so much elsewhere, both before and after this chapter, of the work and the sufferings of Jesus, here does not mention Him; he speaks of the dwelling of God with the humble, of the mercy of God to the contrite, not as fruits of the Incarnation or of the Sacrifice of Christ, but as results of the glory of the Eternal Father, the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. Of course, one is as true as the other: it is through Jesus that we have access to the Father; it is he who loves Jesus whom His Father will love; it is with Jesus that the Father will come unto him, and both make their abode with him. But the special truth that seems set forth in these verses is, that the Incarnation and the Sacrifice of Christ, while they are to us the cause and the source of all blessing, of all pardon, of all grace, of all holiness, of all salvation, are themselves not the cause but the effect of the mercy and the love of God the Father; as Jesus says Himself, 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.' It is because of God's own nature, because He is eternal, because He is almighty, because He is the Creator of all things, that He loves us, that He pitied us in our weakness and our sin, that in His love and in His pity He redeemed us by the blood of His Son, and that in His Son He Himself dwells with all that believe in Him. The reason why God is so eager to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones, is simply His own majesty, His greatness, before which they are so little.

II. This is a great and glorious thought, if only we can bring our minds to the effort of grasping it. Our creation, our preservation, our redemption, and all the mercies of the gospel, are not merely

acts of God, things that He has been pleased to do, and which we may rejoice that He has done, but which might have been otherwise: they are all the overflow of the fulness of God's own nature. Although it is undoubtedly true that God acts freely and not by constraint, that it was of His free will that He made the world, instead of abiding alone, with none loving Him but Himself in the united love of the Eternal Trinity, yet in the world that God has made, as He has made it, and as He has dealt with it when made, we see God's own nature working, and what God has done is what it became God to do. Because He is what He is, He has done what He has done.

Thus then God's promises are made surer than certainty; we know and more than know that He is ready to dwell with us. Only let us be such as those with whom He dwells: 'with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' Humble and contrite—we use these words often, but we hardly think of what they mean. 'A broken and a contrite heart,' says David, 'Thou wilt not despise.' A contrite heart is more than a broken one—one crushed to powder, that is, and that feels itself dust and ashes. It is by a real, deep, and lasting sense of sin; by feeling it as a personal pain and grief, a crushing burden that lays the spirit low, an overpowering oppression that grinds it to dust—it is by this and this only that God's company is to be secured; it is where this temper is found that He finds His home. Do not think that this is said only of the beginning of the Christian's conversion: that though he must have a contrite and humble spirit before God will come to dwell with him, yet his heart is healed and his spirit exalted as soon as God is come. It is with the heart that is—not only that has been—humble and contrite that God will dwell; it is with the spirit that does not forget its own sin, even when it feels and knows and rejoices in God's grace. Let no Christian, however true his faith, however warm his love, ever think while he is yet upon earth that his repentance has lasted long enough or been deep enough, that he has done with sorrow for old sins, or watchfulness against present temptations, and may give himself up entirely to the joy and peace of believing. Let no man imagine this, unless his faith and love be greater than his who, only a year before he finished his course, told how 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.'

G. H. SIMCOX.

Then let me do it, as one whom He hath ordained, with holiness and fervour, and with an earnest faithfulness for the souls committed to my care. Christ was His own evangelist. Prophets had evangelised,—the angels evangelised to Zechariah, to Mary on the hills of Bethlehem. Simeon, and Anna, and John the Baptlst evangelised. And many preachers and sacred writers have evangelised since Pentecost. And all nature has her evangelic tongue to hearts that are truly set to its music. But all are through Him, and by Him, and for Him,—all representing Him. To Him it belongs of right, to all else by deputy. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek.'

And indeed, whatever else may be preached,—be it in the eloquence of nature, or be it by human reasoning, underlying all other language —Christ must Himself, by His own inward voice, preach the glad tidings to your heart, or it will never be glad tidings to you.

I. And now I come to the main point, What are the 'good tidings' which Jesus preaches? And to determine the answer to that great question, we must of course look to the preaching of Jesus Himself when He was upon the earth. What was it?

I know no better way you can take to judge of this than to put together, in their order, the great occasions of His preaching. And you might arrange them thus: the sermon on the mount, of which the 'good tidings' were to show the introduction of the dispensation of love: access to a prayer-hearing God, a freedom from all anxiety and care, in consequence of God's wonderful provision for our bodily wants. Then, the conversation with Nicodemus, of which the 'good tidings' were the spiritual entrance into the kingdom, and the great doctrine of salvation by faith, that 'whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Then, the conversation with the woman at the well, of which the 'good tidings' were to set Him forth as at once the One who knows and satisfies the most inmost thoughts of every human heart. Then comes the address at Bethesda, with its 'good tidings' to declare the happy truth that it is a Man, 'the Man Christ Jesus,' who shall both raise us up and judge us at the last day. Then the deep and mysterious application of the miracle of the loaves, which exhibits Christ as the very bread and life of His people. And so we pass on to all those teachings of the nature and the character of the Kingdom of God, with their beautiful similitudes, all showing forth the freeness of the offer, the wideness of the compass, the certainty of the increase, the perfection of the union; till we read those exquisite whispers of the Last Supper, with all their depth and intensity of promise and love,—promise of an eternal presence, of an unbroken peace, of One that shall be better than Himself coming, and of a meeting

together for ever and ever, and love, love even to absolute oneness,—love to the end,—love fond and true, but faithful unto death. And we would not leave it till we hear it pausing just before His ascension, and sending forth the good news to the utmost bounds of our earth, 'Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.'

I think many of you must have felt that 'the good tidings' of the gospel are not often either preached or accepted in a thousandth part of their goodness. Ministers seem to be afraid to propose any thing so very free; and to most persons, when it is proposed, it appears really too good to be true. There is much gospel which is so ungospel-like that it is no gospel at all.

II. Now, 'good tidings,' to be 'good,' must first be 'tidings' of happy things, then the happy things must be free gifts, then the offer of the free gifts must be universal, and then the possession of the free gift must be immediate,—all which the gospel literally is.

It would be a glorious thing if it fell upon our ears, this day, that a mighty king, all dominant, with his enemies at his feet, should find it in his heart, and be able to afford it in his magnanimity, to give to his foes a peace unshackled with a term, and to feed and to regenerate, and to love, and to restore, to more than all they had lost, all his conquered ones.

But what would that be compared to the 'good tidings' which I bear from the King of kings to every sin-bound soul and to a whole hostile suffering creation?—'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,' to the end 'that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

JAMES VAUGHAN.

Christ the Good Physician.

He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted. ISAIAH lxi. 1.

THE whole life of Christ, from end to end, was one great, recognised, felt mission. He never lost sight of it,—He never did one independent action. The authority from the Father, the power by the Father, the responsibility to the Father,—the glory claimed for the Father,—were everywhere. There is no expression which Christ more often repeated than 'I am sent,' 'He that sent me.'

And you will never realise your being, or read yourself aright, till you see life a mission,—'I am sent to a work,—I must do it,—I must go back, and give an account of it; and according as I have done it, so I shall be treated.' The point of life, the strength of life, the unity of life, the dignity of life, the joy of life, lie in the power of the concentration of that one thought, 'I am sent.'

OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

To find out every one his own particular mission, is the first great secret which every man has to solve. This is not the place to do it —only for me to tell you the far ends of your mission.

And this is one, kindness, useful kindness.

I believe that the mission of every woman is twofold: one, to be a helper to man,—to ministers, to missionaries, to her father, to her brother, to her husband, to her son, to her friend;—the other, to be a comforter,—to go about everywhere characteristically a comforter.

And the mission to every man is to do good. If he is a religious man, to do it spiritually to the souls of men, and physically to their bodies. If he be not a religious man, still to do good, morally and materially, to all men.

I do not find, even among Christ's missions, the mission to reprove, or to condemn, or to judge. Still less can it be ours. For in this world of sin, and pain, and sorrow, to be everywhere a sunbeam in the dark,—to soothe, to restore, to heal, to be an influence for gladness,—happy they who walk through the chambers of this great hospital, carrying with them their instruction everywhere,—'He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted.' I cannot conceive a higher scope for life.

I. There are two kinds of broken hearts, the natural and the spiritual. They may be united; and sometimes the heart is broken in nature, when it is very plain that it may be broken in grace. Often, they are divided.

Now, I do not for a moment think that Christ was sent to heal only the spiritually-broken, that is, the contrite ones. I cannot so limit the grandness of His undertaking here, any more than I could confine to penitents only the embrace of His large invitation, 'Come unto Me, all that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' Surely it is to all humanity. Every broken heart becomes the subject of Jesus's care, and is dear to Him if for no other reason in the world but for this, because it is unhappy.

And there are more broken hearts in our world than most men think. And if every one who has ever, by unkindness or unfaithfulness, gradually sapped the foundation of another's life, and been a heart-breaker, could be tried for it, there are a great many now at large, upon this earth, who would be brought in murderers!

And very many there are who, in the silence of a bitter bereavement, or some hidden grief, too secret and too sacred to be told, going on in the solitude of their sorrow, not yet knowing the Healer's hand, carry with them from morning till evening, and from evening till morning, an aching, breaking heart, which is hastening them to their grave.

God forbid that I should doubt that to all, however little they

may yet know it, Jesus is standing near, and whispering His unheeded overture of most restorative love.

But when a heart is really broken for sin,—when the conscience throbs with memory, and the bitter sense of unpardoned guilt racks the mind, and it has no rest,—oh! then, let every penitent, let David, let Mary, let Peter say, what a Physician Christ is to them! All who ever came under that healing, would rise up and bear witness with one consent, till they knew the sorrow, they never knew the joy; that the pain was nothing to the soothing; that gladly would they live again that suffering for those sweet influences of Christ; and that He Himself was never known to them, till they knew Him by His bindings. Happy, happy broken hearts, that have ever come under Jesus's care!

II. Christ was Himself well trained in the school of suffering hearts that He might learn to 'bind' the mourners. There are many who tell us, that it was not the cross which killed Christ—that He died upon the cross too soon to make that possible,—that the real cause of death was a broken heart. Whether that be so or not, it is clear that all which goes to break men's hearts, He felt. As the representative Man, as the substitute for sinners, He knew and He tasted the breakings of the soul: temptations, awful in their severity, the tremendous tension of thought, inward struggle, the onslaught of all the powers of darkness, the immeasurable burden of imputed guilt, the hidings of His Father's face, desertion, desolation, the hell of the mind. He knows, as none other knew or shall know, what He is treating when He deals with a 'broken heart.'

No wonder, then, that the 'bindings' are what they are. Let me tell you one or two of their traits.

They are delicate. I can find no other word. Every one who has had them, will understand that word. They are delicate—delicate so as to meet every exquisite feeling—no one need shrink from them—delicate.

And they are very wise. You at once feel that you are under a master-hand. There is no possibility of a mistake. It is omniscience—the omniscience of a personal experience that knows all, that knows you—guiding the hand of perfect love.

And they are sure and thorough. Jesus never did a partial thing. There is no such thing as a half-cure in that treatment. Rather, the weakness is turned into the more strength, and the sickness is the very element which makes the health. They say that the bone is the strongest in the part where it was once broken. Assuredly this is true in the Divine setting, so true, that no heart which has not known a breaking knows indeed what strength is.

It is not for me to venture to describe to you the methods of that Great Physician. None but His patients know them, and they need no words. And those who have not felt it, would not understand it.

Only this let me say, in order that no one may be surprised, or faint under the process. He very often begins by giving a person more pain. Sometimes He commences by turning the natural into a spiritual sorrow.

But, in the laboratory of heaven, there are sweet salves—sweeter than all the herbs of Gilead,—the balm of the first sense of pardon, —the odour of sanctity,—the ointment of God's love—the anodyne of spiritual rest.

And the ligatures which He draws are so soft and so fast. True, when you are being bound up, you may at first find that you have not what you once called liberty. There may be a feeling of imprisonment for a season; but it is a sweet prison to 'prisoners of hope,' who are only with Him, shut up with Him, the Keeper, whom they love.

And the bindings are very restful. The bound one is very conscious of the virtue which every moment is going out of them; and he well knows that they will be taken off as soon as he can bear it, and that he will be well presently,—oh! how well!—in a world where there are no relapses.

I once heard a prayer of a rough ploughman in a village schoolroom, and this was his prayer,—'Dear Lord, if there be any poor stricken one in this room to-night, come and bind him up, and bind Thyself, Lord, into the binding.' To that prayer I say Amen for you —'Bind Thyself, Lord, into the binding.'

JAMES VAUGHAN.

Christ the Liberator.

To proclaim liberty to the captives. ISAIAH lxi. 1.

IT is a word which just matches with the sovereignty of the act. It is so large, and joyous, and free; it so takes, as granted, that the thing is quite done,—'to proclaim,' 'to proclaim liberty to the captives.' It is just the same in the fourth of S. Luke, but there we read it 'preach.'

It is literally, 'to cry as a herald,' 'to herald liberty to the captives.' For it is a high note,—the note of liberty. We cannot whisper it,—we must fling it wide and loud,—'proclaim liberty to the captives.'

It is a blessed name of Jesus, and as true as it is blessed, The Liberator. We can scarcely conceive anything grander, or more delightful, than to be always going about making everything free.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Suppose that in some mysterious way you had the power,—it was given you as your office,—to be in all places, and to all persons, an emancipator, not, as some great philanthropists have been, to one class of their fellow-creatures at one time, but universally, to all creation. What a life it would be! What a continual radiance! That is Christ, always and essentially the Liberator. We love to think that such a Captive as He once was has now such a recompense. To this end, Christ first liberated Himself.

He bound the great binder hand and foot. He repelled him at every turn, and dashed him, like Lucifer, out of the sky. Step by step, 'He led captivity captive;' He made for Himself a spiritual body, which, in its own nature, and by the law of its being, soared at once beyond the trammels of its humanity. He burst the bands of death, 'because it was not possible He should be holden of it:' in everything, He asserted, and claimed, and took His freedom.

I do not say that by virtue of His Divine nature He was free, that would not be free as man is free; but He became free, like us. Freedom is a relative word, freedom presupposes captivity. He was a captive that He might be a freeman; and He went through the processes of the emancipation, miraculously, indeed, in many parts, but still, it was a real emancipation. And therefore He is the Liberator, because He was once Himself the prisoner.

And all Christ did, and all Christ was, upon this earth—His whole mission—was essentially either to teach, or to give, liberty. His preaching was, for the most part, to change the constraint of law into the largeness of love. Every word He said, in private or in public, proved expansion. He was always opening new fields of thought and being, and bidding men to go out into the breadth of the liberty of their sonship, and their destiny, and their immortality. 'The time cometh, that neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father:' 'God is a Spirit:' 'Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, "Thou shalt *not*," "thou shalt *not*,"'—negative. All negatives are narrowing. 'I say unto you, Love.' All love is broad. His disciples were always looking down into the valleys and shut-up things, He led them to the high hills beyond,—'Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions.' Men saw the shadows, He pointed to the sun travelling in its strength, without which those shadows could not be, and into which all those shadows were to be absorbed. 'Your sorrow shall be turned into joy;'—'Go and sin no more;'—'Neither do I condemn thee, go in peace.'

II. All His miracles were liberating miracles. They were all of one character—to loose and set free. The withered hand,—the

nerve-tied foot,—the chained tongue,—the impotent body,—the cells of blindness,—the dungeons of deafness,—the imprisoned faculties,—the fettered soul,—the enthralled, hell-bound being,—the entombed life: He always opened the door and let it go;—it was one continual 'Ephphatha.' Wherever he passed, He found slavery, and He left freedom.

And even the three days when His own dear body was in the tomb, the separated soul, true, as I believe, to its nature, went and 'preached to the spirits in prison,' that some, even in Hades,—made exceptions that day for the greater triumph of the cross,—might proclaim Him, even to other worlds, Liberator.

It is just what this world wants. The fact is, that from the time when the gate closed on Eden, men, shut out from God, and shut into themselves, have all passed into captivity. And there is no heart, until it is made free indeed, which is not, in some aspect of it, a prison-house.

There is at this moment, if you will only believe it, nothing between you and the bright heaven of God's eternal love. You would walk with a light step if you knew that your sins were forgiven, and that Jesus was yours. But who shall unbind the cords of unbelief which are now holding you back from the unbinding?

True, it needs an effort. The very striking off the manacles will hurt the poor sinner in the act of his liberation. But when they are once off, who will regret or remember the pain? 'Stretch out your hand,' and the manacles will fall.

This world is Hagar; but we, we are not of Hagar, we are of Sarah. 'We are not the children of the bond-woman, but of the free.' And if you are really Christ's Church, you are citizens of that Jerusalem which is 'free,' and she 'is the mother of us all.'

JAMES VAUGHAN.

Christ the Revealer.

And the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound. ISAIAH lxi. 1.

THIS clause of the sentence Jesus took as His text in the fourth chapter of S. Luke, thus, 'Recovering the sight of the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.' A bold paraphrase,—either referring to those special horrors which went on in many prisons, in the putting out the eyes of the prisoners, and the sores which were caused by the galling of the chains,—or else, more simply, it implies that blindness is itself one and not the least kind of bondage. And there can be no prison more or worse than that shut-up feeling, which is the necessary consequence of the want of sight.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

It will be enough for us to consider that a very important part of the way by which Christ 'opened the prison to them that were bound' was by the 'recovering of sight to the blind.' For surely, in this great prison-house, there are no more fast-bound captives than those who are fettered by physical blindness; or, which is still more enthralling, by that intellectual and moral darkness of which that blindness is the allegory. To this, therefore, we address ourselves, Christ the opener of the shut eyes, Christ the Revealer.

The lesson to be drawn from blindness, and the restoration of sight, would be much more familiar to the Jews than they are to us. For this affliction is so far more common in the East, and so many are they who suffer from it, that the blind are continually recognised in the Bible as a distinct class, and they are even made the subjects of legislation in the Levitical law,—a speciality to which there is no parallel in any European code. Therefore, it was no small part of the glory of the beneficence of the expected Messiah, that He should meet this great public calamity, and be a 'recoverer of sight to the blind.'

We, of course, have to do now with spiritual blindness. And I propose to take Christ's miracles, which He wrought on the eye, as an illustration of the way in which he deals with the darkness of the soul.

I. And first, what is spiritual blindness? It is that incapacity, that want of power, which hinders the mind from seeing invisible things: truth, an unseen world, God. It may arise from different causes, though the real root of it is almost always in the affections. It may arise from something coming in between the eye of the mind and the object which it ought to see. Or it may arise from weakness in that organ which admits the light—that is, faith. Or it may arise from the want of a proper connection in the medium between that organ and the sense or faculty which is to catch the rays when they are transmitted—that is, religious intelligence. Or it may be in the seat itself where vision is exercised and applied—that is, the soul, or the inner life of a man. From whatever cause the blindness comes, it is found in very various degrees—degrees varying according to natural constitution, or according to habit, or according to the length of time which it has been allowed to go on. All are blind. Even those who suffer from it the least are still, compared to what they might be, and with what they ought to be, blind. And however clear the mental sight may be, and however acute the perceptions may be about all other things, all minds, without a single exception, until some process has passed upon them, are totally and absolutely blind about spiritual things.

Nevertheless, practically, and among us to-day, there are shades in

the darkness. For we all, more or less, have been under healing treatment, and according as we have accepted or rejected it, according as we have acted upon it or not, so to-day is our condition. There are some who really can see nothing at all—all spiritual things are to them a perfect blank. There are others who grope. There are to whom, by long cherishing of the darkness, it has become judicial. And there are a few happy ones, to whom there is left nothing but a little film, and it seems only to want one more touch, and they shall 'know even as they are known.'

II. Christ reveals by His very being and person, because He has embodied into His humanity, and therefore made personal to us to see, what else must have remained for ever beyond the reach and scope of all comprehension and fancy—the Godhead, the perfection of holiness and wisdom, the mind of the Almighty. Therefore, He is called the Word, because, as a word we speak represents and declares the invisible idea which lies behind that word, and of which that word is the indication, so does Christ, by His very person, and character, and life, exhibit the Father. And you will never arrive at a definite, or even a proximate conception of God and truth, until you study them in the nature and the history of the Lord Jesus Christ, because He is essentially, in Himself, the Revealer.

He also reveals, that is, removes veils, for that is the meaning of reveals, He removes veils,—veils either in the nature of things, or veils which we have drawn by our own sins,—by the Holy Ghost whom He bequeathed, whom He purchased, whom He sends, who He is.

But I have to do now only with His particular province in His immediate action upon the heart, without any distinction as to the means used, pictured to us by His own ministry when He was upon the earth.

The way to see is to be more intimate with Jesus, to have more actual connection between your soul and Christ. Then, the virtue passes from Him to you. You will never succeed till you do that. Put yourself into some closer relationship to Christ, by thought, by prayer. Let Christ lay His hand on you. Feel, 'He is doing it.' Feel, 'Now Jesus is dealing with me. It is an act of His omnipotence if I am ever to see Him, or anything else, as I ought to see.'

This leads to a circumstance, which belongs to all the openings. There was the pre-requisite both of faith and of confession of faith. The only exception is the case in the eighth chapter of S. Mark, and some have thought in that instance alone the cure was slow, and for a while imperfect, because there was the omission of the confession of faith. The man in the ninth chapter of S. John does not, indeed, speak his faith, but he acts it. He went to Siloam. And you must have faith

beyond your knowledge, and trust which exceeds your present experience. Though you cannot yet see your Deliverer,—and of course none of the blind men could see Christ till the miracle was finished,—you must have an expectation that you will see Him; you must have a great conception that Christ is, and that He is more than you yet know, that He can and that He will do what you want, that the time is come, that you are just going to see some great thing. And more than that, you must not only feel that, but you must do something; you must do something in proof of it—anything you like, only something which is in your conscience to do, and which you mean to be for this very purpose—to show that you trust, and that you expect to go to Siloam.

If, then, any part of God's heaven is now shut out from you, if there is any doctrine that you have tried to see and you cannot, if God's love is hidden from you, if you are miserably imprisoned in the thick darkness of your soul, let me advise you, honour Christ in His office and prerogative of Revealer, submit those poor lost faculties of your soul: 'Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.' Be near Him; let Him touch you, go alone with Him out of the town.

What you want is not truth, it is the eye to see it. There are beautiful things near you,—like Hagar's water, one touch of Christ, there it is at your feet,—your pardon, your peace, your heaven, it is all there, just as nature, in all her loveliness, is encircliug a blind man. But Christ must show you. Only Christ shows Christ. 'No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.'

S. John saw a book, and he 'wept' very much 'because no one could open the book, till, behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, He prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.' So Jesus opens truth to hearts, and hearts to truth; and he is free indeed whom the truth makes free.

JAMES VAUGHAN.

Christ the Jubilee of His Church.

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.
ISAIAH lxi. 2.

OUR Lord's text of His sermon at Nazareth stopped at the end of the first clause of this sentence. He did not go on to 'the day of vengeance of our God,' probably for this reason, because His first Advent had nothing to do with 'vengeance:' He did not come then to judge the world, but to save the world; and He could not, therefore, have said of those words, 'This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.'

But, remember that that 'vengeance' of that 'day,' being 'the vengeance of *our God*,' is not against His own people, but against their enemies, including those worst enemies—Death, which is then to be destroyed; Sin, which is then to be shut out; and Satan, who is then to be crushed. For then, God will avenge Himself on all which has ever dared to touch His Church.

And, even in this view, it is pleasant to notice that the 'acceptance' is for a 'year,' the 'vengeance' for a 'day.' 'To proclaim the acceptable *year* of the Lord, and the *day* of vengeance of our God.'

If our Lord left out 'vengeance,' well may I. It belongs neither to my province nor to this dispensation. Therefore, I will keep within 'the acceptable year of the Lord.'

1. There can be no doubt that the 'acceptable year of the Lord' relates to the Jewish 'jubilee.' We may take the expression, 'acceptable year,' as meaning either that it was the year when God specially accepted, or that it was the year itself acceptable. In both senses it is true, for 'the year of jubilee' was at once a standing proof and memorial of God's election and acceptance of Israel, and, as a year of rest, and freedom, and restoration, it was the most acceptable, because it was the most congenial to the mind of God.

This acceptable 'year of jubilee' was the most remarkable institution which ever formed part of any civil economy. Every seventh year of the Jews was ordained of God to be an acceptable year, or a year of rest. Every seventh sabbatical year was a 'jubilee.' This would make the jubilee fall on every forty-ninth year; and it remains still a question whether the jubilee was the forty-ninth or the fiftieth year. There are five Jewish authorities on both sides of that question. But as in the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus, which is the chief reference on the whole subject, it says, 'A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you,' the most popular idea is probably also the safest, that the jubilee was the year after the seventh seventh, and that thus two years of rest came in conjunction. Or a partial solution of the difficulty might be found in the difference which there is between the political and the ecclesiastical year of the Jews, which began six months apart.

Whichever way it was, 'the jubilee'—the word is derived either from the Hebrew name of a trumpet, or from a verb, to release and give back—the jubilee commenced on the tenth day of the month Tisri,—the great day of atonement, and the only appointed feast that the Jews had.

There is surely a deep meaning in the fact that this great season of joy and triumph had its base in the day of expiation, and grew immediately out of the period of deepest penitence and humiliation. Even as Easter springs from Lent, or as every best happiness in

the Christian life comes out of abasement and sorrow, or as Jesus Himself mounted not to His glory till He had passed through His shame.

II. It was this 'acceptable' year which Christ came to 'proclaim,' and of which he said, being Himself the expositor of Himself, 'This day it is fulfilled.'

Some think that our Lord's three years' ministry actually fell on the jubilee, and that there was, therefore, a chronological literalness in His words, 'This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.'

But, whether it was so or not, it was not in one year, or in three years, that the prophecy really came to pass. It belongs to the whole Christian dispensation; it is now; it is being fulfilled while I stand here and speak; we are standing upon jubilee. Therefore it is the more my privilege to try and trace the fulfilment.

It was a grand provision of the Jewish law, and I can never look at it without admiration, that all property, however separated, should revert, at an appointed time, to its first and proper owner. Whatever had once belonged to a child of Abraham could not pass away from him for ever. It was originally a gift of God, and the gift was indefectible. See it in the Antitype. We have sold everything away from us, and for what? For an apple of Sodom, for a mess of pottage, for 'that which satisfieth not,' for naught, for 'the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.'

And we could never have got it back again; it was gone, utterly gone. The beautiful garden, the tree of life, the presence of God in the cool of the day, the holy fellowship and sweet society, the pleasant work, the purity of heart, the approving conscience, the joy of a sinless state,—it had all passed away. And there was no price that we could ever have paid for its recovery.

III. But Christ is 'jubilee,' and jubilee is restoration. It is all come back; and, as everything must be in Christ, it comes back more and better than it went, even as He is more and better than all things else in the world. For he has paid a price in His own blood which more than covers all; and therefore the restitution, to every one who believes, is more than complete.

See it. We have a better Paradise awaiting us than ever Eden was; and this whole earth—not one privileged spot—will presently be as 'the garden of the Lord.' And of the tree of life—the food suited for our new and spiritual being, by which we are to live for ever—we may freely eat. And we have God, not at seasons, but a continual presence speaking to us always by still small voices in the heart, and we can answer Him. And the communion, though broken off a little while, is all re-set; and we shall know one another, and we shall love one another, and enjoy one another (though death

has parted us), for ever and for ever. And it is ours, and will be ours through eternity, to work in the garden of God's Church, 'to dress it and to keep it.' And by God's Spirit in us, we have a holiness which is far better than innocence. And if our conscience tells us of sin, it tells us, too, by sure witness, that the sin is all pardoned, more than pardoned. And in Christ we have a righteousness given us with which the righteousness of the unfallen Adam was not to be compared; and the lost image is restored, and more than restored to us; and very soon we shall wake up in His likeness again, and we 'shall be satisfied with it.' And we have the sweetness of a joy not given in Eden,—that we trace it all to Jesus.

IV. And the restored inheritance, thank God, finds us free. By one great act of Christ, a universal liberty is proclaimed to all believers. True, within the veil a vast work went on, and a tremendous price was paid; but to us it comes in the grandeur of a simple royal boon, by a King's edict, 'Be free.' There are no debts now, there are no judgments hanging over our heads, there are no fetters, there are no prisons of the soul; every chain falls off; every door has opened; for bondage we have life,—and all because the appointed time is come, Jesus has died, Jesus has ascended, and Jesus is 'jubilee.'

Surely it should be all joy now, seeing the 'jubilee' is here. Those angels' voices on the hills of Bethlehem, with their sweet midnight music, ushered it in; and the archangel's trumpet will soon take up the same note, and echo it wide to the whole world:—'The Bridegroom is come,' and the world's desolation, and the world's fast, and the world's expectancy, are nearly over. It is no time now for bonds, or gloom. The appointed season of the Church's power, and the Church's glory, long waited for, is begun. Already it is the grand festival of rest, and liberty, and love. It is all happy if you will only see it so. Take away 'the spirit of heaviness,'—put on 'the garment of praise,—raise your hearts,—fling high your thoughts of triumph,—ye souls restored and free,—for it becometh well 'the jubilee' to be glad, and to hold in more honour, and to bow before, and to give hallelujah to 'the acceptable year of our Lord.'

JAMES VAUGHAN.

Christ the Comforter.

To comfort all that mourn: to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. ISAIAH lxi. 2, 3.

THERE are three kinds of sorrow which pretty nearly fill up the whole circle of grief. There is spiritual, and there is providential, and there is indefinite,—perhaps I may call it constitutional

sorrow. There is the sorrow of penitence,—there is the sorrow of bereavement,—there is the sorrow of a dull spirit and a heavy heart. And to each of these three classes Christ addresses Himself by His promise, and for each He has its own appointed remedy:—To the penitent, 'beauty,'—to the bereaved, 'the oil of joy,'—to the dispirited and cast down, 'the robe of praise.' To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion: to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.'

I. The first mourner in Zion, then, is the penitent. His emblem is 'ashes.' And throughout the Bible that image of 'ashes' is always used. We have the expression,—'to sit in ashes,' to be 'clothed with ashes,' to 'pour ashes on the head,' to 'feed on ashes,' 'to be ashes.' All convey the same thought,—a state worthless, a state defiled, a state vile, a state consumed, a state only for the burning. And that is the feeling of penitence,—the heart takes shame and condemnation to itself, and wraps round it its own conscious degradation and fear of judgment; and to those poor souls, in their 'ashes,' Jesus 'appoints.'

See the way. He gives them 'beauty,'—He does not simply take away 'ashes,' He turns 'ashes' into 'beauty.' The original for beauty' is a tiara,—an ornament for the head. It is the same with the word used in the third of Zechariah, which is the best explanation of this chapter. Joshua 'stood before the angel' in 'filthy garments;' and the angel said, 'Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair *mitre* upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by.'

Now, the whole of my text borrows illustrations from a feast, and the mourners of all the three kinds are to be made ready to sit down, and to banquet with joy. Thus, then, it is now with the penitent. Christ does not only take away the darkness and the misery,—He does much more than that,—He changes them into 'beauty.' You can never simply and only get rid of sin. The only process to escape from what is bad, is to put on what is very good. Need I say how it is done? You are wretched on account of your sins; and you feel too wicked and unsightly that God should ever look upon you,—you feel fit only to be thrown away. Jesus comes, and He puts on you the decorations of His own perfection, and He throws round you and mantles you in the white robe of His own spotless light. In a moment, you have 'beauty,'—beauty so complete, so exquisite, that God Himself sees no blemish.

But I repeat,—that the only method by which the 'ashes' can be

got rid of, is by that putting-on of 'beauty.' And one reason why there are penitents in Zion now uncomforted, is this, that they do not yet see how God acts with penitents. You must not be negatively *not* 'ashes,' but you must be positively 'beauty;'—not only *not* 'guilty,' but 'righteous,'—not only *not* 'cast out,' but 'a guest' fit for the heavenly feast,—in other words, you must be 'in Him' who is lovely, and in that loveliness you are lovely. The fact is, you are looking for too little;—you look for pardon, when you ought to be looking for righteousness. Expect the greater, and you will also get the less,—'beauty for ashes.'

How Jesus was Himself the 'ashes' to make your 'beauty,' I must not stop to say. But remember this, that the red heifer was slain, that its ashes might mingle with the lustral water, to purify the unclean.

II. But there is another order of the afflicted, to whom we most commonly give the name of mourners,—the bereaved,—and to whom, therefore, I apply the second clause,—'the oil of joy for mourning;' for they, too, must be fitted for the feast. Mourning was sent them for this very end, that it might fit them for the feast. Therefore they have 'the oil,'—the oil, soft and comforting,—the oil of holy anointing,—the oil bright and good,—'the oil of joy.' Jesus, that Prince of mourners, was Himself so consecrated with the ointment, that the very 'oil' which made His sad manhood so peaceful, so sacred, so triumphant, flowed down to the weakest and to the lowest of His members,—'to the very skirts of His clothing.'

Let me tell you one or two of the ingredients which go to make that 'oil of joy.' There is a drop,—perhaps it is the sweetest,—that, though all go, He will never go. And close akin to it,—that He who sent the sorrow, knowing best its burden because He has borne it, will Himself come the nearer and the dearer than before, and will proportion accurately the balm to the wound, and the strength to the day.

Then there is the thought, that, wherever there is union with Christ, there is no real separation, and scarcely death,—only a thin veil for a little while,—no relationship changed,—no love diminished,—union greater than before, because freer from sin. And very soon that hidden face and that silent voice will be back again, and everything will be restored.

And then there is that simple sense of pardon in God's love, which has such a strange power to the soul,—like a sunbeam in the bosom, gathering up the clouds. And when sin, the source of all griefs, is gone, there is no grief worth naming after it.

And then the sweet consolation of holy duties,—now done for Jesus in a way never done before, and to which we feel *that* 'oil' has

consecrated us. And many a kind providence, and many a proof of tender remembrance, and many a gentle voice of the soul, and many a soothing influence, falling so gratefully on the sore, and grated, and roughened paths,—there is the 'oil.'

And then, now and then, they have so much of a present heaven in them,—such blessed voices within the veil,—and such independence of things around us,—and such elevation and rapture of mind,—these are all secrets which perhaps none but the bereaved know,—but those who do, they understand well what that means,—'the oil of joy for mourning.'

III. But there is a third rank in Zion's mourners, perhaps the largest; and I do not know whether these are not the most to be pitied. They have no very definite cause of grief, but partly from natural habit of mind and body, partly from little circumstances, partly from temptation, they carry with them, from morning to evening, and from evening to morning, an almost habitual 'spirit of heaviness.' And how unfit they are, in that state, to sit down to the heavenly banquet, they themselves best know. But they must be prepared and clad for the high festival that is coming. And thus Jesus does it,—He draws them out of themselves, and turns their thoughts from looking in,—He shows them their mercies, and makes them reckon up their blessings, and teaches them that their sorrows are unreal,—and that they have no answer to the question, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' He leads them to rest more in Him; by His wonderful alchemy, He turns anxiety into foresight, and a vague apprehension into a buoyant hope; He shows them that they are undertaken for; He gives them more of inward peace; He lifts them up to higher levels, where the things of this world look little; He places them where the shadows lose themselves; and gradually they shake off their dust, they realise more the love of God, they recognise their safety and their hope, they live under the activity of new life, and 'the spirit of heaviness' is gone, and they put on 'the blue robe of praise' instead of that black garment of heaviness.

But remember, only Jesus can do this. It is a disease which has only one Physician, and He who gives the 'garment of praise' is only the Lord Jesus Christ.

JAMES VAUGHAN.

OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

The Spirit in the Son of Man.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek. ISAIAH lxi. 1.
The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God. S. LUKE i. 35.
For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him. S. JOHN iii. 34.
How that God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good. ACTS x. 38.
Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God. HEBREWS ix. 14.

THE fact that our Lord's earthly life became effectual through the ministry of the Holy Spirit within Him, and not alone through the inherent virtue and power He brought with Him from His pre-existent state, has become one of the commonplaces of theology; and yet how little do we realise its true import, and cultivate that humility and dependence of soul which would distinguish us if this great truth were ever in view! In spite of our formal adhesion to this doctrine, it seems still strange to us that one whom we think of as holy and divine should be indebted at every stage of His earthly life to that inward mystic ministry which is so necessary to us because of our sinfulness. We speak of the Holy Ghost as a Deliverer from inbred corruption, and are ready to assume, quite unwarrantably, that where there is no corruption in the nature, the stimulating forces and fervours of His benign indwelling are needless. We are accustomed to look upon this ministry, which perpetuates in our souls the saving work of the Lord Jesus, as though it were a special antidote to human depravity only. For the Spirit to abide moment by moment with Jesus Christ, and work in His humanity, seems like painting the lily, gilding fine gold, and bleaching the untrampled snow.

But that is a mistaken view. When the universal Church shall have been built up and consecrated to its high uses, it will be 'by the Spirit' that God will dwell in the temple. And the temple of Christ's sacred flesh needed this same indwelling presence. It was imperative that to the Son in His humiliation the Father should give the Spirit, and give Him, too, upon no grudging scale,—give Him for His own sake as well as for ours, whom He came to represent and to save. The great Sanctifier blends the essential forces of His personality into this divinest type of goodness, to show that goodness in even the only begotten Son is not self-originated. In the less mature stages of Christ's expanding humanity implicit and docile dependence on this inward leading was the test of His entire acceptability to the Father.

I. The part of the Spirit in the conception as well as in all the

after-work of Jesus Christ seems to suggest that inter-dependence of persons in the holy and blessed Trinity, about which we know so little, but which clearly preceded all the economies of human redemption. In the inscrutable relationships of Father, Son, and Spirit, there must have been an eternal reciprocity, a fellowship of thought, counsel, and mutual action, necessitated by the unity of the Godhead as well as by the eternity of the divine love itself, which otherwise could only date from the birth of creatures destined to be objects of the divine love. These sacred names do not represent merely latent potentialities in the divine nature waiting for some crisis in human history before they can awake to consciousness and effective operation. In the eternal Godhead there was a co-relation of life scarcely suggested by the parallels of our rigidly defined human personalties. And the action of the Spirit in the miraculous dawn, and in the no less miraculous progress and meridian of Christ's earthly life, was the continuation of an influence which penetrated His consciousness and benignly wrought there prior to the incarnation.

II. The part fulfilled by the Spirit in Christ's humanity is further indicated by the fact, that at the baptism in the river Jordan this august intermediary between the Father and the Son descended upon Him again, assuming for the moment the passing form of the dove. The living symbol identified with this Pentecost which inaugurated Christ's official life was seen by Jesus and John, possibly also by a number of the spiritually fit who were present in the crowd. The dove-like form signifying an inward visitation from the presence of the Father implied peace, tenderness, fidelity, holy and gentle fellowship. The messenger did not need to come to this obedient and undefiled Son as scorching fire, although it became fire when He in due time ministered the Spirit to sinful men. The Spirit came to bring new anointings and discernments and prerogatives to the humanity of Jesus Christ, to be a vehicle of fresh visions, fresh powers, fresh aptitudes, fresh vocations, which mighty things were by-and-bye to pass from Christ to His disciples.

III. The Spirit came in this significant way to the Son of Man as an abiding guardian of His unspotted sanctity. It was He who led up the newly baptized prophet to His temptation in the wilderness. Unlike Simon Peter, who, in the spirit of pride and self-sufficiency, challenged the dangers and difficulties of his ordeal, and fell woefully, the meek and holy Jesus did not vaunt His own strength, and met the forces of the adversary only when led to do so by this messenger from the Father. The Spirit was assured of the moral fitness of this lowly and obedient Man to meet the awful strain He was so soon to feel. The Spirit indicated that the moment fixed, in the counsels of the Father, for this supreme test had come. And the Spirit led Him

to this critical conflict, comforting, equipping, and building Him up by the way. Angels might minister to His lower natural life when the conflict was overpast, but it must be the Spirit's unshared distinction to bring afresh into view those deep things of God by which His higher life must be sustained.

IV. The Spirit seems to have been given as some mysterious compensation to the act of self-emptying humility which preceded the incarnation. Our Lord's inheritance of illimitable wisdom and power was not forfeited by that act, but put in the trust of another, and made over to Him again as the emergency arose in His life and work upon earth. He needed the loving counsel and vigilance of this attending presence, for He was stripped of the defences of His own former attributes. The Spirit was the loving and vigilant guardian of the priceless virtues and loyalties of the Son, and the excellence and perfection of that Son consisted in His ready heedfulness to this inward voice which interpreted the will of the Father to His human soul. God's Son had emptied Himself of His eternal wisdom, and the Spirit was sent to guard against the hazards of that privation, and restore, by secret and subtle inspirations, that equality of wisdom with the Father which He had not seen fit to grasp. And the public and private teaching of Jesus Christ was the product of His implicit dependence on this inward councillor. After He had been raised from the dead and outsoared the humiliations of His earthly lot, we are told that it was 'by the power of the Holy Ghost that He gave commandment to His disciples.' And that must have been still more significantly true of all that He spake while still present as one of themselves. The Father gave the word,—gave it by the continuous testimony and elucidation of the Spirit who dwelt within Him, and made Him a type of the elect Church of the future. There were realms of infinite knowledge which He once traversed at will, now needing to be unveiled afresh; and the Spirit was given to Him without measure in just and fitting proportion to those vast amplitudes of truth to be restored to His view by the holy and invisible companion of His incarnate life, and hereafter to be made free to the thought and quest of His disciples.

V. The Spirit seems to have been given to compensate for that renunciation of power involved in the mystery of the incarnation, and as an earnest of its coming restitution. The wonderful works accomplished by the Son of Man took their rise, not so much in the superhuman qualities of His personality, as in the power of that Spirit with which He was anointed.

VI. The Spirit came as a Spirit of assurance to compensate for the glory the Lord had renounced, and to be an effectual offset to those powers of wrath that seemed to be stirring within His troubled

history. And the Father gave this Spirit of assurance and testimony to His one perfect Son most bountifully, for was there not an infinite complacency to be declared? There was no stint in either the Father's love or the Spirit's secret revelation of it to His heart. This Spirit of peace and filial gladness was given to Jesus without measure.

VII. In the great act of sacrifice in which the life of the Son of Man culminated, the presence and power of the Spirit are again revealed. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that it was by 'the eternal Spirit Christ offered Himself without spot to God.' The Spirit attended in that solemn mystery to inspire and energise the great motive principles of the transaction, and to bear His witness to the spotless perfection of the offering. He had been the constant channel through which the divine perfections flowed in perennial supply into this unblemished manhood. The fervour, the loyalty, the affluence of that perfect filial love which had been maintained within Him, gave an all-penetrating and all-comprehending virtue to the sacrifice of the cross. And, more than that, the Spirit was present as an eternal witness of this act of eternal redemption. He had searched the deepest motives out of which it took its rise. There were human witnesses of the outward tragedy, it is true, but the Spirit who had been the lifelong companion of Christ's deepest and most secret thoughts, was the one solitary witness of the infinite and eternal virtue which inforced and informed the sacrifice. This most pure and sensitive Spirit had never been for one moment disobeyed, grieved, or in any degree repelled. Just as an attendant waited upon the steps of the sacrificing priest, who scrutinised the victim to be placed upon the altar, and was a sponsor for its unblemished health, so the Spirit who had watched with unresting jealousy and vigilance over the life of the Son, mediated in His last offering, and in earth and in heaven became the sponsor for its spotlessness and soul-cleansing power.

VIII. The Spirit was given to Christ in this bounteous measure as the Head and Pattern of the new humanity. His fulness comprehended our need and the needs of all; and those who become true members of His body may find the same Spirit in His manifold influences their daily and inalienable possession. We are 'joint heirs with Christ,' and that comprehends the privileges of His earthly as well as the royal splendours of His heavenly life. Christ's humanity was expressly typical, and of His untold fulness may we receive. No gift of the Spirit lavished upon Him is denied to us, if we seek it for His sake alone, and as loyal and uncompromising servants of the divine counsels. The word spoken of Him may prove true of us—'The Father giveth Him not the Spirit by measure.'

T. G. SELBY.

OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

The Servant of the Lord.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me: because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek (or poor): He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison (or of the eyes) to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (or the year of the Lord's good pleasure). ISAIAH lxi. 1, 2.

I. WHO was that servant? Some portion, it may be a large proportion, of what is said respecting him might possibly be partially fulfilled in the person of a Jeremiah or some other righteous man, consecrated and devoted to the service of his Lord, acting for Him and under His immediate influence, and suffering because of his unwavering faithfulness to Him. But surely there would still be left many expressions which could not, without great exaggeration, be applied to any such servant, however faithful. And this we know, as we follow the narrative of the early history of the Church of Christ contained in the book from which during the first part of each new civil year the lessons in the afternoon or evening services of the Church are selected, that apostles and disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, having, it would seem, these sayings of the Prophet in their minds, did, directly and without doubt, apply to Him again and again this very title of 'Servant of God,' declaring how 'God having raised up His servant, sent Him to bless His people in turning away every one of them from their iniquities' (Acts iii. 26), how 'against His Holy Servant Jesus, whom He did anoint (notice the language compared with the text), both Herod and Pilate were gathered together, to do whatsoever His hand and His counsel had foreordained to come to pass, and praying with one accord that He would grant unto His servants (a different word from that used before by them respecting "the Servant of God"), to speak His Word with all boldness, while He stretched forth His hand to heal, and that signs and wonders might be done through the name of His Holy Servant, Jesus' (Acts iv. 27-31). But this is not all. The Evangelist S. Matthew, writing his gospel, as is generally admitted, specially, though not exclusively, for Jewish Christians, when he is speaking of Jesus Christ 'healing all who followed Him,' and of His charging them that they should 'not make Him known,' expressly applies to Him the language used in the forty-second chapter of this book, which opens with the words: 'Behold My servant, whom I have chosen, My beloved, in whom I am well pleased, I will put My Spirit upon Him,' etc., declaring that thus was 'fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah' (xii. 18, etc.).

But there is still one far more important point connected with the

words of the text, and with the interpretation thereof, as regards the 'Person,' in whom they were completely fulfilled, which outweighs all other circumstances connected with them, and must give to them an interest all their own.

Whether we take the passage as it is in our English Bibles, translated from the Hebrew text of the Prophet Isaiah, or as it is in the Greek version of that text, or as it is in the best manuscripts of S. Luke's Gospel and in one English version of the same, we can see how truly every portion of it can be said to have been literally fulfilled in the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth, if we accept the account of that life as it is given to us by S. Luke and his brother Evangelists.

II. For was not indeed 'the Spirit of the Lord God upon Him,' who was conceived of the Holy Spirit before He was born into the world, and on whom at His baptism the Holy Spirit descended, as S. John the Baptist testified (S. John i. 33), so that Jesus became in S. Luke's words (iv. 1) 'full of the Holy Spirit'? Was He not indeed a true Messiah—the Christ, the Anointed of the Lord—anointed (as S. Peter explained to the Roman centurion, Cornelius, and those who were with him), 'with the Holy Ghost and with power'? (Acts x. 38). Was it not His office as the Messiah to 'preach good tidings to the poor'—poor in spirit as well as poor in this world's goods, and to the meek, proclaiming in another sermon than that which He preached in the Synagogue of Galilee—the Sermon on the Mount by the Sea of Galilee, 'Blessed are the poor,' as it is in S. Luke (vi. 20), the 'poor in spirit,' as it is in S. Matthew (v. 1), 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,' 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth'—and declaring on another occasion that one of the most certain proofs of His being the Messiah who was to come was this, that 'to the poor the gospel was preached'? (S. Luke vii. 22.) Was He not specially sent—sent by His Father in heaven—to bind up the broken-hearted, and set at liberty those who were bruised, to comfort and relieve those who were crushed by sorrow and suffering, by distress and sin, bidding them 'Be of good cheer,' 'Go in peace,' 'Weep not,' 'Thy sins are forgiven,' 'Go and sin no more,' and inviting all who 'laboured and were heavy laden to come unto Him that He might give them rest'? Did He not proclaim recovery of sight to the blind, whether physically or spiritually blind, when again and again He gave or gave back the blessed power of seeing to those who had never enjoyed it or had been deprived of it, when, as Isaiah had himself foretold, in the person of Jesus, 'the people which sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death did light spring up' (S. Matt. iv. 16, and Isaiah vii.), when He declared that for judgment

He had come into the world 'that they which saw not might see' (S. John ix. 39), that 'while He was in the world He was the light of the world' (S. John v.), that if 'any one followed Him, he should not walk in the darkness, but should have the light of life' (S. John viii. 2)?

R. ELWYN.

Good Tidings.

ISAIAH lxi.

'THE Spirit of the Lord God is upon me'—mark the effect—how a man will feel, what his sympathies will be, as the Spirit of the Lord God breathes through him.

'Because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings'—that is what the angels sang when the real Man was born, when the Man was born that God generated and not nature. And whenever God generates a man it will be Jesus Christ over again. We shall never be the seed of God till we are the seed of Jesus Christ.

'Good tidings to the meek'—for only the meek will welcome the good tidings of God. The proud and self-sufficient will welcome the good things of the world, the prosperity of commerce, the coming in of mammon. But only the meek and tender-hearted will welcome the good tidings of God.

'He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted.'—That is what you will be able to do in your measure, if, when you go in to see some poor distressed creature, you say, 'I am not going alone in this instance, but the Lord is going in with me. I am to be only the vessel through which shall flow the divine comfort.'

'He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to all captive spirits, the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the great year of grace'—the great year of Jehovah's grace—'and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give to them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that,' in the beauty of their garments, the joy of their hearts, 'they may be called' trees of the Lord, 'trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.' Do you not see how bound you are to be beautiful, that men may speak well of your heavenly Father; that they, seeing how beautiful your life is, may see how beautiful God must be, and so be won for Him through your beautiful life?

The tenth and eleventh verses tell us what ought to be the effect upon us of what God is to us: 'I will rejoice'—will you? 'I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God.'

Suppose your joy does not spring from that root, is not the word strictly spoken about your joy, that it is like the crackling of thorns under a pot? It makes a very great blaze, but it is gone. You see, God is what we can be utterly delighted with, and if we are not delighted, we are ignorant of Him: there are veils before our eyes, we do not see His beauty.

'For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has adorned me with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with jewels.' Does not the action of the sun every day do exactly that? Directly the action of the sun comes in and pours upon the earth, does it not make her covered with jewels? That is a parable to you of what God is to the soul. For God has constructed the universe, and has so constructed Himself that, if you use your senses, you may see all God is in the laws of the universe. That is what the next verse actually says.

'For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations.'

J. PULSFORD.

V OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

A Condition and a Promise.

Seek and ye shall find. S. MATTHEW vii. 7.

I. FROM these words two lessons are to be gathered. First, that God Himself draws near—comes to us—in the persons of His poor and sick and suffering ones. And secondly, that if we fail to recognise and to find Him then the fault is our own. It is because we have never accustomed ourselves to seek Him. And, as in these, so in countless other ways, God is near us in this world, about our path and about our bed; longing to manifest Himself to us in all His wisdom, love, and mercy. And yet how is it with many of us? The years go over our heads, we 'live and learn,' gaining experience here, buying it there, finding out many things most useful for us to know; but Him for whom we might gladly exchange all that the world can give and be the richer for the change —Him we find not. And why not? Because we seek not.

And yet the words are plain enough. 'Seek, and ye shall find.' A condition and a promise. And if words mean anything, then the importance of that word 'seek' cannot be over-estimated. Then in this morning's first lesson there comes that solemn exhortation, 'Seek ye the Lord while He may be found.' And again, if words mean anything, this word 'seek' becomes almost terrible in its importance. Once more, our Blessed Lord in one place likens the Kingdom of Heaven to 'a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls'—and here again we find seeking strongly emphasised.

II. Pearls are not found lying in thoroughfares, or scattered about the highway. They must be sought for, laboured for, dived for, at great risk and peril. And so, too, although the earth abounds with precious stones, minerals and gems, a man may be standing, separated only by a few feet from the vein of precious gold, or the seam of coal —close to him may be lying hidden the priceless diamond or the sparkling ruby, and yet he may be ignorant of the very existence of such things. Certainly he will never expect to find them without lifting a finger to do so. He knows that he must seek, and labour, and sift, and dig. 'Seek, and ye shall find.' The same law holds good.

III. 'Seek, and ye shall find'—a condition and a promise. 'Seek not, and ye shall not find'—a natural deduction from the same.

Seeking involves toil, weariness, disappointment, suspense, loss. You go to an exhibition, and you see there some of the greatest inventions of the age—the stupendous results of the inventor's toil and thought. Yes, you see the results. You admire the marvellous ingenuity shown, the perfection of workmanship exhibited. But you see nothing of all that the great work cost its author. You cannot conceive what it cost him in toil, and brain-power, and health. You know nothing of the weariness, the many failures, the sleepless nights involved in seeking out that truth, or law, which the inventor felt sure was hidden somewhere, and in perfecting his design.

Yes, to seek, really and honestly, is no small matter.

Still, the promise is to those who do. And unless a man has thus sought with anxiety and earnestness; unless he has known all the weariness and hardships of seeking; he has no right to say that God cannot be found—that there is no God.

IV. In seeking there must (1) be the preparation of the heart. 'He prepared his heart to seek the Lord his God.'

2. Then we must seek in humility. But, as a matter of fact, men begin with pride. They know so much; they have nothing to learn. They have 'common sense,' and that is quite enough for them. And yet they are obliged to accept many things, in spite of this 'common sense.'

3. Again, we must seek God in prayer. But, as you know, the scoffer is too proud to pray. He cannot condescend to any such weakness. Yet the promise of the text was spoken chiefly in connection with prayer.

4. We must seek God again (remembering all that seeking implies and all that it involves) in His Word. J. B. C. MURPHY.

The Miracle at Cana.

S. John ii. 1-11 with Romans xii. 6-10.

I. ON the miracle at Cana we note:

(*a*) The kindness and condescension of Jesus in attending this marriage in humble life. 'Jesus was present at this marriage when invited thither: in which He cared not for His own dignity, but for our benefit.'

And again: 'He who did not disdain to take upon Him the form of a servant, did not disdain to come to the marriage of servants.'—S. Chrysostom.

'Let man blush, therefore, to be proud, since God has humbled Himself; He has come to a marriage, who being with the Father, instituted marriage.'—S. Augustine.

(*b*) Comparison of this miracle to the Gift in the Holy Eucharist.

'Since He has affirmed and said, This is My Blood, who shall ever hesitate, saying, that it is not His Blood?

'He once turned water into wine, in Cana of Galilee, at His own will, and is it incredible that He should have turned wine into blood? That wonderful work He miraculously wrought, when called to an earthly marriage; and shall He not much rather be acknowledged to have bestowed the fruition of His Body and Blood on the children of the bride-chamber?'

II. On the Epistle. Let love be without dissimulation (Romans xii. 9).

(*a*) Hitherto the Apostle has been speaking of duties to be discharged by such only as had duties of office in Church or State to discharge: but now he gives a precept which includes all men, since Christian love is a duty common to all (Rom. xiii. 8, S. John xiii. 34).

(*b*) Every man, therefore, is bound to render love to his neighbour.

'Euclid showed in himself the true symptoms of brotherly affection, who, when his brother in his rage made a rash vow, saying, Let me not live, if I be not revenged on my brother; Euclid turned the speech the contrary way, Nay, let me not live, if I be not reconciled to my brother; let me not live, if we be not as good friends as ever we were before. Shall a heathen thus outstrip us Christians? nature

be stronger than grace? the bonds of flesh tie faster and surer than the bonds of grace? We call on God our Father, we acknowledge, or should do, one Church our mother, we suck the same breasts of the Old and New Testaments, we are bred up in the same School of the Cross, fed at the same table of the Lord, incorporated into the same Communion of Saints. If these and the like considerations cannot knit our hearts in love one to another, the very heathens will rise up in judgment against us and condemn us.'

(*c*) This love is most of all due to Christ.

'What Alexander said of his two friends, Hephæstion and Craterus, is made good in the practice of too, too many in these days. Hephæstion, says he, loves me as I am Alexander, but Craterus loves me as I am King Alexander; so that the one loved him for his person, the other for the benefits he received by him. Thus some Nathanaels there be that love Christ for His person, for His personal excellencies, for His personal beauty, for His personal glory—they see those perfections of grace and holiness in Christ that would render Him very lovely and desirable in their eyes, though they should never get a kingdom or a crown by Him. But so it is, that most of those (which is to be lamented) do it only in respect of the benefit they receive by Him, scarce any love Christ but for His rewards, some few there are that follow Him for love, but many for loaves; few for His inward excellencies, many for His outward advantages; and few that they may be good by Him, but many that they may be made great by Him.'

S. J. EALES.

VI. ILLUSTRATIONS.

Gifts. Rom. xii. 6.

Gifts come from on high in their own peculiar forms. A man's nature runs either to herbs or weeds; therefore let him seasonably water the one, and destroy the other (S. Matt. xxv. 27; 2 S. Peter i. 8).

We are justly punished when we misuse lawful things, and we misuse lawful things when we desecrate the gifts of God (1 Tim. iv. 4).

Gifts and Graces. Rom. xii. 6.

Graces are what a man *is*; but enumerate his gifts, and you will only know what he *has*. He *is* loving; he *has* eloquence, or medical skill, or legal knowledge, or the gift of acquiring languages, or that of healing. You have only to cut out his tongue, or to impair his memory, and the gift is gone.

But you must destroy his very being, change him into another man, obliterate his identity, before he ceases to be a loving man. Therefore you may contemplate the gift separate from the man; you may admire it, and despise him. But you cannot contemplate the grace separate from the man.

Diversity of Gifts. Rom. xii. 6.

In 1724 there came up to the gymnasium at Wexiö, in Smaland, a youth of seventeen, sent there to study divinity; but the tutors tried his memory with all the flies in the regular academic assortment, and found it a mighty void, an absolute *mare mortuum*: no long-strung confession in it, no Greek, no poems of Anders Bording, no hymns of good Bishop Kingo, nothing fit for a student to know; and, acting on their report, the father was about to take home the stupid boy and apprentice him to a shoemaker, when the poor lad found an asylum with Kilian Stobæus; and, allowed to wade marshes and climb mountains to his heart's content, waking the plovers and lemmings, collecting insects and lichens and blossoming plants, he filled that gaunt, empty memory with the *Systema Naturæ*, and earned for the once impracticable and ignorant boy the name pre-eminent amongst his countrymen, Charles Linnæus, whom all the world recognise as the 'immortal Swede.'

Excessive Tolerance. Rom. xii. 9.

George Eliot, in a letter, says, 'I am not in any sense one of the "good haters"; on the contrary, my weaknesses all verge toward an excessive tolerance, and a tendency to melt off the outlines of things.' In this she is typical of the age. Excessive tolerance of error and practical wrong, until the full truth is not spoken, nor an energetic protest against iniquities in high places uttered, is one of the more perilous tendencies of our life. We are so afraid of being labelled 'bigot' that we refuse to utter our mind, and we have such a horror of intolerance that we allow evil to prey upon us night and day.

Perseverance. Rom. xii. 11.

Some years ago a student in college lost one of his eyes by a missile thrown by a class-mate. His other eye became so affected by sympathy that its sight was endangered. The best oculists could not relieve him. He was sent to Europe for medical treatment and change of climate, and tarried there three years, when he returned with only part of an eye, just enough vision to serve him in travelling about, but too little for reading. His father was an eminent jurist, and designed his son for the bar, but this calamity quenched his aspirations in that direction. He resolved to devote himself to authorship in the department of historical

literature. He spent ten years in laborious systematic study of the standard authors before he even selected his theme. Then he spent another ten years in searching archives, exploring masses of manuscripts, official documents, and correspondence, consulting old chronicles, reading quantities of miscellaneous books, and taking notes—all through the eyes of others—before his first work was ready for the press—*Ferdinand and Isabella.* Prescott was forty years of age when he gave this remarkable history to the public. Then followed his *Mexico*, *Peru*, and *Philip the Second*—works that have earned for him the reputation of a profound historian on both sides of the Atlantic. Noble work for any man with two good eyes! Noble work for a man with none!

Dangers of Idleness.
Rom. xii. 12.

Idleness is the very rust and canker of the soul, the devil's cushion, pillow, chief reposal; his very tide-time of temptation, as it were, wherein he carries with much care, and without contradiction, the current of our corrupt affections to any cursed sin.

An Example of Honourable Idleness.
Rom. xii. 12.

The great Jewish traveller of the twelfth century, Benjamin of Tudela, found at Bagdad a large colony of his countrymen. They had twenty-eight synagogues and ten courts, each presided over by one of the chief men of the nation. The latter were called the 'Ten idle men.'

Idleness productive of Vices.
Rom. xii. 12.

The judges of the Areopagus at Athens always sat in the open air because they took cognisance of murder, and the laws of Athens did not permit the murderer and accuser to be under the same roof. They also dealt with impiety and immoral behaviour, but their attention was particularly directed to idleness, as they reckoned this to be the cause of all vice.

Patience.
Rom. xii. 12.

When thou findest thyself in any painful position whatsoever, and bearest it patiently, take heed lest the devil, or thine own self-love, persuade thee to wish to be delivered from it, for thou mayest thereby incur two great evils. First, If this wish did not at once rob thee of the virtue of patience, it would at least gradually dispose thee to impatience. Secondly, Thy patience would become defective, and would be recompensed by God only according to the duration of the suffering; whereas, if thou hadst yielded thyself up wholly to His divine goodness, thy suffering, though but of an hour's duration, nay, even less, would have been owned by Thy Lord as a long-enduring service.

There is no greater proof of grace than to smart patiently and humbly, and contentedly to rest the heart in the justice and wisdom of God's proceeding (Lev. x. 3).

Patience. Rom. xii. 12.

It is not the poverty of the meek, or the afflictions of the meek, or the labours of the meek, but the patient abiding, which is the grace dearest of all in God's sight. This is the grace which is emphatically said to crown and to be crowned (Ps. ix. 18).

Considerate Hospitality. Rom. xii. 13.

True hospitality has a delicate regard to the taste of a guest. When Cæsar Malan once thought of visiting the south of France, he wrote to his friend, Laharpe, at Bordeaux, that he would only come if he found work to do. Laharpe replied: 'You shall hold your first meeting one hour after your arrival.' 'There,' said Malan, 'is what I call receiving a minister of God with hospitality.'

Hospitality a Christian Virtue. Rom. xii. 13.

In 1859, the ship 'Kitty,' of the Hudson Bay Company, was wrecked off the coast of Labrador. While the ship was only disabled, she had passed the Middle Savage Islands and been visited by some Esquimaux, whose ferocious appearance and manners gave the seamen a very painful impression respecting their prospects if they should be cast upon their mercy. The vessel foundered soon after, the larger of the two boats in which the crew endeavoured to escape shared her fate, and only five persons survived. These, after many days of suffering, made the coast; but their joy on seeing human faces was much damped when they recognised that they were Esquimaux. The natives, however, received them most kindly, helped them to land, brought them into their little hut, cut the boots off their frozen feet, and wrapped them in soft skins. One of the women took the last of their little stock of flour to make some warm gruel. Her infant, for whom it had been intended, held out its little hands for the expected food, but the mother gave the whole to the fainting sailors. One of these, a German, afterwards said that he had travelled much, but had never experienced such hospitality before. At night the sailors discovered the cause of this contrast with the other Esquimaux, when, from the tent which their friends had made for them out of the boat-sail, they heard the voice of praise and prayer, which, though in an unknown tongue, was evidently addressed to no unknown God. Next day these native Christians conducted the party to the nearest missionary station at Okak, where they were well cared for by the German missionaries.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Hospitality Rewarded.
Rom. xii. 13.

The Churches of Bohemia, after the suppression of public worship in the native language in 1079, sank into a state of lethargy and declension, in which they remained for about a century. Then Papal persecution driving many Waldensian Christians out of France and Italy, the fugitives were welcomed and sheltered by the Bohemians. In consequence of this hospitality, the gospel took new root in Bohemia, the errors of Rome being dispersed by the light of the New Testament. The united churches not only grew in grace themselves, but sent out missionaries to various countries, including England.

Feeding an Enemy.
Rom. xii. 17.

Two men, living in the southern part of Africa, had a quarrel, and became bitter enemies to each other. After a while one of them found a little girl, belonging to his enemy, in the woods at some distance from her father's house. He seized her and cut off both her hands; and as he sent her home screaming with her bleeding wrists, he said to her, 'I have had my revenge.' Years passed away. The little girl had grown up to be almost a young woman. One day there came to her father's door a poor, worn-out, grey-headed old man, who asked for something to eat. She knew him at once as the cruel man who had cut off her hands. She went into the hut, and ordered the servant to take him bread and milk, as much as he could eat, and sat down and watched him eat it. When he had finished she dropped the covering that hid her handless wrists from view, and holding them up before him she exclaimed, 'I have had *my* revenge!' repeating the very sentence he had uttered when he so cruelly maimed her. The man was overwhelmed with surprise and humiliation. The secret of it was that in the meantime the girl had become a Christian, and had learned the meaning of the verse: 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.' How beautiful the conduct of this injured Christian girl appears in contrast with that of her heathen enemy's.

Vengeance.
Rom. xii. 19.

A person happened to complain in the hearing of a pious man of some conduct which had been manifested towards him by his neighbours, and concluded by saying that he had a large portion of vengeance in store for them. 'You have stolen it, then,' was the answer, 'for I know it does not belong to you of right, because God says, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay."'

Hearing, not Reading.
Isa. lv. 3.

A poor man, being on his death-bed, asked that the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah should be read to him. Though weak, and faint, and full of pain, yet when he heard the words, 'Incline your ear, and come unto Me; hear, and your soul

shall live,' he gathered up his strength to say, 'What a mercy, sir, that it is not "Read, and your soul shall live;" for if it had been I could not have been saved, for you know I am no scholar! But, blessed be God, it is "Hear, and your soul shall live;" I have heard, and believed, and trust I shall be saved.'

Trust the Promises. Isa. lv. 3.

Once a man crossed the Mississippi on the ice, and fearing it was too thin, began to crawl on his hands and knees in great terror; but when he gained the opposite shore, all worn out, another man drove past him gaily, sitting upon a sled loaded with pig-iron. That is just the way most Christians go up to the heavenly Canaan, trembling at every step lest the promises shall break under their feet, when really they are secure enough for us to hold our heads and sing with confidence as we march to the better land.

Eternity. The Close of Life. Isa. lvii. 15.

Albert Barnes, in his sermon on 'Life at Threescore,' illustrates the magnitude of eternal things as he approaches the end of life, compared with those which ordinarily occupy the attention of mankind, by the following figure:—

'The earth, as it moves in its orbit from year to year, maintains its distance of ninety-five millions of miles from the sun; and the sun, except when seen through a hazy atmosphere, at its rising or its setting, seems at all times to be of the same magnitude—to human view an object always small, as compared with our own world. But suppose the earth should leave its orbit, and make its way in a direct line towards the sun. How soon would the sun seem to enlarge its dimensions! How vast and bright would it become! How soon would it fill the whole field of vision, and all on the earth dwindle to nothing! So human life now appears to me. In earlier years, eternity appeared distant and small in importance. But at the period of life which I have now reached, it seems to me as if the earth had left the orbit of its annual movement, and were making a rapid and direct flight to the sun. The objects of eternity, towards which I am moving, rapidly enlarge themselves. They have become overpoweringly bright and grand. They fill the whole field of vision, and the earth, with all which is the common object of human ambition and pursuit, is vanishing away!'

A Great God and a Little God. Isa. lvii. 15.

Collins, the freethinker, met a plain countryman going to church. He asked him where he was going. 'To church, sir.' 'What to do there?' 'To worship God.' 'Pray, whether is your God a great or a little God?'

'He is both, sir.' 'How can He be both?' 'He is so great, sir, that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and so little that He can dwell in my heart.' Collins declared that this simple answer from the countryman had more effect upon his mind than all the volumes which learned doctors had written against him.

Christ covering the Sinner.
Isa. lxi. 10.

An American citizen had been condemned in a Spanish Court, and was to die; but the Consul interposed, and declared that the Spanish authorities had no power to put him to death. Being determined to save him, he was wrapped round in the flags—the stars and stripes. 'Now fire, if you dare,' he said. 'If you do, you defy the great nation represented by these flags.' There stood the man, and before him the soldiers; and yet he was invulnerable, as though in a coat of mail. So is the sinner, wrapped round by the blood-red robe of Christ.

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Scriptures Proper to the Day

EPISTLE	ROM. XII. 16-21.
GOSPEL	S. MATT. VIII. 1-13.
FIRST MORNING LESSON	ISAIAH LXII.
FIRST EVENING LESSON	ISAIAH LXV. OR LXVI.
SECOND LESSONS	ORDINARY.

I. COMPLETE SERMON.

Worship in the Soul.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. S. MARK xii. 30, 31.

HEN you have discoursed on the properties of the soul and done fair justice to the area which it fills, you can hardly believe that there is any higher faculty in a Christian man. Nevertheless, the graduated excellence in his threefold nature, as fixed by S. Paul in the words, 'May your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire,' may be found on careful examination an accurate scale of value in man's worship of the Incarnate Son of God. The spirit, the soul, and the body are three strata in the sphere of human nature of which I think we may observe an image in the three strata of cloud to which we owe so much of the profound and inexhaustible beauty of the skies which canopy the earth, ascending from the rain-cloud to sun-lit fields of the higher masses and then ascending to the highest sphere, the climax of cloud beauty, the stratum of the cirrus. And these cirrus clouds, as they are called, are a symbol of the spirit, and the middle stratum is a symbol of the soul.

But such things as these are but a faint image. Let me turn to the New Testament itself and point out that there are in the more elaborate discourses of our blessed Lord, as I think, the most clear distinction between the faculties and the sphere of the spirit and the soul. I refer first to the Sermon on the Mount, and then to many of

our Lord's divine discourses in the Fourth Gospel—S. John's—especially to the discourses in the later chapters.

The Sermon on the Mount has been described by one who had studied it profoundly as 'a perfect philosophy of life, based on the maxims of faith and leading to the very highest perfection.' And he says again, 'In truth it is a perfect code, a system of perfection.' Well, we know that, in our own ordinary devout love and study of the Scripture. We recite the Beatitudes and note the extreme loveliness of each feature of the saintly face as star after star opens its silent eye on the soul which meditates in the evening hour,—an hour of thinking, feeling, loving. Its practical lessons teach us, one by one, every duty to man's own self, to his fellow-men, and to God. It throws light on deed and word and thought. It is the touchstone of every affection, telling what is pure or impure, true or false, safe or dangerous; of every passion in the nature of man, whether it be chastened by holy discipline, or left to be reckless and wild. It determines action in relation to the laws of the world's society and also to the mind of God. It rouses men to exercise their influence. 'Ye are the salt of the earth.' 'Ye are the light of the world.' It teaches devotion to God in prayer, to our neighbours in charity and temperance. It proves the joy of suffering, and also the delightfulness of happy peace with others.

Well then, we ask, if this be true of this discourse of our Lord, can you gild this gold? Can you add to the chalice that is rich and red to the brim? Can you improve—can the divine Master Himself improve on this picture of a perfect life? Postponing any answer to this question, which by-and-bye I would rather that you should answer for yourselves, I ask you to observe that the great characteristic of the Sermon on the Mount, with the exception of the first nine verses, is Duty! And again, the larger proportion of the duties enforced are duties to our fellow-men. To this nine paragraphs of the Sermon are devoted. Then again, man's duty to himself occupies a considerable space—such, I mean, as the discipline expressed in the duty of fasting, unworldliness, singleness of motive, freedom from over-carefulness and anxiety, a clear judgment in distinguishing between the true teacher and the false, the wise building of our hopes and expectations on a firm foundation, and avoiding all shallow and delusive notions of religion. I believe I am justified in saying that, with the exception of the nine beatitudes, the theme of this wonderful discourse is duty—duty most righteous, most practical, most impartial, most pure, most heavenly-minded—but duty.

Now I return with the question, Can any one add to this perfection of divine counsel which the Sermon on the Mount communicates to the human soul? I dare not answer it. I am not fit to answer it.

But I will only ask you in passing—for there is not time to dwell on it this afternoon—I will first ask you to recall the last discourses of our blessed Lord in the later chapters of the Gospel of S. John. Then I think you will be able to answer this question for yourselves. Some of us here perhaps remember that in one of the greatest pictures of the world two wise men are represented as standing on the summit of the stairs in the great Temple of Learning. They were the great teachers of ethics in the school of philosophy at Athens. One has his hand stretched down to the ground, the other lifts his hand to heaven. So, with reverent distinction, the adoring Christian may note the graduated excellence of the saintly life of which the human organs are the soul and the spirit. Both are capable of receiving high and holy teaching. The one doctrine tends to perfect man's life on earth ; the other points heavenward to divine communion with the mind of God.

Now let me speak of the discipline of the soul as tending to perfection here, and also as an indispensable condition of the higher energies of the spirit. The soul contains the affections, passions, desires of the man, under the rule of the will and conscience. It is to a great extent what in popular language we often speak of as the heart. It is an organ of vast power. The soul is the form which determines and indeed contains the body. Sometimes, you know, the body is spoken of as a sort of case or vessel, as containing the soul. But it is more proper to say that the soul, which is the living principle,—the soul contains the body. The soul is the ruler of the body. Whenever the body appears to rule the soul, well then it is, self-evidently, rebellion, revolt against the right and sovereignty of the superior soul. Hence, my brethren, it comes to pass that there is no method of releasing man from the degradation of the body except by working upon his soul. You know as well as I do what a strong and vehement and almost absorbing interest enchains the mind of a thoughtful Englishman in our day, except, we say, those who are prejudiced by their privileges and hide-bound by their optimism, to anxious discussion of the social problem of the modern world. The physical and bodily condition of some millions of our fellow-men is miserable, and not only miserable, but degrading ; and people seeing this, and stung by it, jump up and cry for legislation or for administrative reform. Well and good ; they may be necessary. Or others with greater mental acuteness look to education ; yes, and this is necessary, provided it be real *bona fide* education of the whole man. But what is to be insisted on is this—to be insisted on on platform and in church and in the street—that no betterment of the body, or even of that great organ of the body, the brain, is the lever by which even the bodily condition of the man can be raised to the state we

all, I trust, desire to see accomplished. Rescue families, if you please, from crowded, indecent, offensive houses, called in bitter irony their homes; secure them a living wage; give them honourable hopes of a modest independence at fifty, and a comfortable old age, free from servility and patronage, at sixty-five—and then? and then? Can you raise them to the level of an honourable and happy manhood without first and for all the years of their youth educating them in the discipline of the soul? Do give a thought to the influence of the soul on our own life. There in your soul are the passions, instrumental for good and instrumental for evil. Take one—take resentment, as a noble quality, part of the equipment of all honourable men, if it be resentment against sin, vice, meanness, cruelty, injustice, and if it be under control as a war-horse is under its rider. But if that passion break into angry violence, revenge, hatred merely against those who offend us, or we sink down stupid, morose, and sullen,—where, I ask you, can you find an enemy more deadly to life, health, or happiness, or a poison more virulent even against the welfare of the body than this passion of the soul? And you know that the same, and even worse, may be said of intemperance and of lust. To seek to raise the home and leave the soul of the individual man or woman, is indeed to daub the wall with untempered mortar. 'Lo, when the wall is fallen, can it not be said unto you, where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it?'

Or now let us take the kindly affections of the soul. Man lives by what he loves. Knowledge and power and ambition and liberty and pleasure and ease will not support you. They are like our sports and energies in the hours of sunshine, our excitements and adventures in the day of youth and strong life; they are like our brilliant evenings in society, our refreshments in the talk of the scholar, in conversation with women of sympathy and genius, oftentimes a light without much warmth, a cold breath from a pale heart. But just as in the night-time the wakeful ear is aware of the steady punctual stroke of the quarters into the hour, when the rest of the world is silent and slumbering, so does our soul with its secret beatings long for love, to love and to be loved. It is the constant pulse of the human heart, yea, and of the heart out of which are the issues of life and of death. To love nothing which God hates, to grow towards loving all that God loves, to love whom and what He will and as He will, and to love or fear nothing more than God—this is the discipline of the affections of the soul.

'An idol is any object which comes between God and the soul.' 'The love of God is a tender flower and a shy bloomer that will not thrive under the shadow of any greater affection.' These are common sayings, but they are sayings which must be taken to heart if a man will worship the Incarnate Son of God with a perfect soul, and that

his soul may be preserved entire unto the coming of his Lord Jesus Christ.

Most reasonably then, as the Lord Jesus said, He who knew all the treasures of this present life, everything on earth, every form of loveliness and manliness, as well as He knew the courts of the heaven above, most reasonably then did He say, 'What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'

The soul then, being this complex thing, with functions so admirable, faculties so mighty for good or evil; it is plain that the discipline of the individual soul is an antecedent condition of the energy of the spirit. For 'who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' The soul which has been purified and perfected by the discipline of the Sermon on the Mount may take comfort in the encouragement of the words, 'As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.'

And again, were the climax of perfection in the Church on earth only the consummate symmetry and beauty of the human soul; were we like that one of the two sisters who said, 'Sister and I should both like to be birds: she would like to fly, I should like to make the nest;' were we to live for three-score years and ten, or even to live for ever in the blessed task of exhausting that wondrous Sermon on the Mount, we might well look down and say, 'The well is deep, and we have nothing to draw with.' But though the infinite depth we know not, we do know, thank God, that we have something to draw with. We have what was implanted within us by the Holy Spirit of God in the beginning, and has been renewed to us again and again, day by day, ever since. We have the desire, the affection, the hunger and thirst, we have the love of the soul which can only rest in like-mindedness to God, and as drop by drop that water of life begins to satisfy, yet ever quicken that holy thirst, the discipline of our own soul,—oh, it brings its own reward a thousandfold. The discipline of the soul will prove to us to-day and to-morrow, and to the end of our days, that according to the Lord's promise it should be even in us as 'a well of water springing up into everlasting life.'

CANON FURSE.

OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

II. OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE.

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. ROMANS xii. 15, 16.

PAUL is pressing on the Christians at Rome the cultivation of that grace which lies at the root of of all other graces; but which, because it is the root, lies deep and hidden from the knowledge of him who possesses it: the grace of humility. Other graces we may be conscious of, and thank God that we have them and that they are growing in us. But the moment a man thinks he is humble, he ceases to be so. And, to judge by S. Paul's Epistles, pride and its concomitants—vain-glory, self-conceit, selfishness, envy, uncharitableness—were the faults to which Christians were peculiarly liable in the early life of the Church.

It was the one thing which made the Apostle uneasy about his Philippian friends. The one note of anxiety in that thoroughly happy letter he wrote to them: 'If ye want to fill my cup of joy to the overflowing, there is one thing which will do it. Live in unity, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem the other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.' The same life-blood runs through us all. We have one Father, one Redeemer, one Sanctifier; our Lord is one, our Faith is one, our Baptism is one. Be kindly affectioned, then, one to another, in brotherly love: in honour preferring one another: in diligence not slothful: in spirit fervent: to the Lord doing service: rejoicing in hope: in tribulation patient. in prayer persevering: to the wants of Christians communicating: given to hospitality. What a wonderful picture of a Christian's life! Transfiguring all the daily round of work or pleasure with the thought of God: and making him the better workman because of this thought: enabling him to enter into the pleasures and the business of life all the more heartily and happily. Then as a golden rule to take with us into our social life, S. Paul adds, 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.' It is a call to sympathy.

I. Let us take the last clause first. It is the easier of the two, and yet it is far from easy. 'Weep with them that weep.' There are not a few, thank God, who exert themselves to relieve the suffering which they find surrounding them in manifold forms. Never were

there so many philanthropic works as in our day. For every form of suffering there is some special organisation for relief. It is well. It is a first Christian duty. The very test of discipleship. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'

II. Such heart sympathy as this is not easy of acquirement. It cannot be put on. Those self-centred commonplaces which run off the surface do not touch the heart because they do not come from the heart. No! it is just God's love showing itself through us to our fellows. But sympathy is a wide word. We generally confine it to suffering or sorrow. But there is a sympathy in joy which, though at first it seems easier, is really harder to attain. There are, of course, pleasures which we happen to have in common with others. Men, as the saying goes, of kindred sympathies will find that they naturally take delight in the same enjoyments. But this is not the Apostle's meaning, 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice.' Can we rejoice at the prosperity of others? Can we enter into the joy of one who has succeeded where we have failed? Can we see another step into our place and do the work we have been trying to do far better than we have done? It needs a Barnabas to feel genuine joy at the sight of what God's grace enables others to do (Acts xi. 19). He was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost. Is there not a point beyond which the happiness of others is positively provoking to us? A joy the sight of which wearies and at last irritates? A fulness of success, and honour, and wealth which we either compare invidiously with our own or else grudge to its possessor? For sympathy in sorrow the human heart may suffice. For true sympathy in other's joy a man must rise to an angel's height. They were the first to congratulate the sons of men on having been made higher than they through the Incarnation of the Son of God. 'For verily He took not on Himself the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.' 'When He took on Him to deliver man He did not abhor the Virgin's womb.' And the angels rejoiced in our joy. We can rise to this if we will. Set it before you as your aim. And begin by trying every day to make others happy. There are some who seem to have an inborn conviction that the whole world, with everybody and everything in it, was created as a sort of necessary appendage to themselves. Their fellow men and women they expect to live to minister to their various requirements. Their expectation is never realised. Better far to spend yourself for others. For he that loseth his life in this way shall find his true life develop. He that giveth in this way, to him shall be given: good measure, pressed down, and running over, shall men give into their bosom. To make others happy is within the reach of every one every day. And it is

one of the secrets of a happy life; for the man must be happy who rejoices in the happiness of others. 'For such, the waves of this troublesome world beat on the rocks far below. He dwells in the region above, where the eternal sunshine of God's own life settles and gladdens.' I spoke just now of an aim in life. S. Paul speaks of one which I would fain leave with you to-day. 'Set not your mind on high things, but condescend to men or things of low estate.' Use and develop all the gifts you have: covet earnestly the best gifts. But forget not that gift which if you possess will ennoble and sanctify all else; and without which all else is worthless—the gift of God's own charity.

A. T. LLOYD.

The Christian's Conflict with Life.

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. ROMANS xii. 17-21.

IT is a very usual thing to represent the life of the Christian under the figure of a conflict. 'I have fought a good fight,' writes the Apostle Paul (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8), 'I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness'; and this is a representation widely adopted by Christians of our own day in a manner which is very injurious. Fighting is certainly a grand word, and one which flatters our imagination and vanity; but fighting in itself does not make the Christian. The conflict with vast obstacles which oppose the attaining of our ends, if it is carried on with effort and perseverance, is certainly a sign of the existence of a considerable inner power of mind and will in us, but it does not prove that this power is really of God, that a divine life is really in us so as to constitute us Christians. Every one who is not of a feeble and effeminate disposition has to fight in this earthly life, —that is a necessary consequence of his position; obstacles which must be overcome place themselves in the way of every one who has resolved upon any object in life. The more selfish a man is, the more numerous are these obstacles, and the most perfect egotist has the hardest conflict.

It is not the conflict itself which is the mark of a Christian; it is not the mere strength of character which is of importance

before God; it is the good fight that distinguishes the Christian. The special nature of the conflict with life determines whether we may be looked upon as Christians or not. It is most important for every one among us to examine our conflict with life, in order to determine whether we stand forth as soldiers of God and Christ, or as fighting for ourselves, or possibly even for the kingdom of him who, as the holy Scripture says, 'is the prince of the power of the air.' For this reason we are thankful to the Apostle for pointing towards the Christian's conflict with life in the epistle of the day.

In connection with this subject, we will ask: 1st, In what this conflict consists; 2nd, How the Christian has to conduct himself in this conflict.

I. 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.' These words, which stand quite at the end of our epistle, really form its substantial contents, and thoroughly pervade it. In them the two subjects of our meditation are included. 'Be not overcome of evil,' says the Apostle in the first place to every one who is speaking of the conflict with life. Dost thou understand, O fighter, he seems to say, the relation in which this single word stands to thy pretended conflict? Is it really the evil in life that thou art fighting against? Or is it not rather the good, the true, against which thou art striving? Is not thy fighting directed rather against law, order, and custom, both human and divine? Did not thy battle with life arise probably from thy refusal to submit to the proper restrictions of life, or even from the God of mercy following thee throughout thy life,—not allowing thee to take a step without presenting Himself before thee, that thou mightest feel after and find Him, in whom 'we live, and move, and have our being,' and thou wouldest not submit thyself to Him;—thou, the powerless creature, wast desirous of asserting thyself against the all-powerful Creator? If this is so, then thou mayest fight, and even have a hard battle to fight, for it will be 'hard for thee to kick against the pricks;' but thou art not fighting as a Christian.

He who does not fight against evil does not fight as a soldier of Christ. That is the first condition. But that alone is not sufficient. A man may in a certain sense fight against sin without maintaining a conflict with life and with the world. If it should come to this, he must see and acknowledge the evil against which he is fighting in the world and in life. According to experience, at least, the number of those is by no means small who talk of a battle without thereby coming to a real separation from the life of the world. In fact, they have an inward joy and satisfaction in that which is of the world, and fight zealously for its riches, pleasures, and enjoyments, without reflecting that by so doing they leave a stain on their pretended con-

flict with evil. Now, we will not judge such people; we will let them trifle with the weapons of the conflict for the amusement of their vanity, until God from heaven, with His powerful hand, plunges them into an earnest and deadly struggle with sin. We must only say so much to them, that they are not yet Christian fighters. Those only fight with life as Christians, who with the Apostle can say from their hearts, 'God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world' (Gal. vi. 14). The world must be crucified unto him, and, that which follows of necessity, he unto the world, in whom a Christian conflict with life is to begin.

'We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ' (1 S. John v. 19, 20). A man must have experienced that in its truthfulness if he is to fight with life as a Christian. It is the indispensable attribute of a Christian combatant to have a living and earnest feeling and conviction that sin is in the world, and has also penetrated through all the veins of its body, and poisoned human life; that on this account the life of man and the thoughts of his heart are evil from his youth. We only possess this conviction if the Son of God has given to us a disposition—which is quite new to the natural man—to know Him that is true, and to be in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ, who is the real and eternal truth. But when we have once received this disposition, how suddenly the scales then fall from our eyes! How we see life suddenly exposed in its sinfulness, in its foolishness, in its ridiculous littleness, in its deformity! And we not only see it,—we have a living perception of it in our hearts. We do not now understand how, until this moment, we have been able to have a single joyful hour, when the most admired wisdom is a castle in the air built by imagination, the most splendid virtue a mere mirror of egotism, the purest beauty only a bait for the more common or more hardened sensuality. In a word, the world and life are crucified to us; such a condition cannot be more emphatically expressed.

When a man has arrived thus far, the conflict with life is not long in beginning. He is now also crucified unto the world, and beaten in the pillory. Scorn, derision, enmity, persecution, present themselves in abundance to such a man. The word of the Lord is soon fulfilled: 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth,' and men realise only too quickly that 'I came not to send peace, but a sword,' and 'A man's foes shall be they of his own household' (S. Matt. x. 34-36).

But is this now really the Christian's conflict with the world? Or if this conflict has any connection with it, is it the very essence of it? Holy Scripture tells us, 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world' (Eph. vi. 12); and another Apostle, 'Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith' (1 S. Pet. v. 8, 9).

II. There is only one way to victory. But by God's grace that is a sure way. Reduce the conflict with the world to a conflict with thyself. Overcome the world by overcoming thyself. Thou canst only protect and defend thyself by attacking thyself—that is the simple rule. In other words, 'overcome evil with good.' The Apostle himself will explain this to us.

Overcome by the conquest of self. In particular, we have at first nothing to do but to leave alone. 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good,' is the general watchword; and close by it is the special one, 'Recompense to no man evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.' Yes, indeed, if we reprove in return, if we recompense evil for evil, if we avenge ourselves, if we only have come so far as to wish to guide the arm of divine wrath, and forget that vengeance belongs to God, and even begin to look upon our cause as God's, then all hope is lost, and Satan has won the victory.

But the Christian carries also an offensive weapon, and that not a useless one—love. 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.' Such a weapon is victorious—it cannot be otherwise; it does more—it heaps coals of fire upon the head of the brother; that is to say (2 Samuel xiv. 7), it kindles in him a new spark of divine life, and draws him into the kingdom of light. Yes, for this reason we are called to conquer through love—love alone is capable of defending itself. But this love is possible only through continual self-conquest—by thorough mortification of the old man. If his eye is first blinded, we learn to look at men with divine eyes—the more so, when we see behind them the murderous assaults of the prince of this world, who is using them for his instruments; then our heart goes out to them in pity and love, and we feel by experience what this means: 'God so loved the world.'

R. ROTHE.

OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

The Apostle's Polemics.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. ROMANS xii. 21.

'BE not overcome of evil'—'be not conquered by evil' (so we might more faithfully render it)—'be not conquered by evil, but conquer evil by good.' The Apostle here, as so often elsewhere, has before his mind the image of the Christian soldier. Nothing shows more completely how, in his time, peaceful as it was, the military character of the Roman Empire filled the whole horizon of the ordinary thoughts and topics of men, than the Apostle's constant allusions to the armour, the sword, the shield, the helmet—the battle, the conquest, the triumph. They show this, and they show how he did not shrink from using these images, even for the most peaceful, for the most solemn, for the most sacred purposes: they show that he was not in his epistles a different man from what he was in common life; that the sights and sounds which filled his eyes and ears in the world around him were not forgotten when he took the parchment scroll, and bade his companion write down at his dictation the words which were to comfort and strengthen, not the Roman Christians of his own time only, but the whole Church of God for ever.

'Be not conquered by evil.' This is the first and universal duty of the soldier everywhere; in all warfare, earthly as well as spiritual, spiritual as well as earthly. 'Be not conquered by evil.' Courage, daring, confidence, in the face of evil, whether that evil be the evil which kills the body or the evil which kills the soul—determination not to be defeated by it—that is the first duty; without such spirit, without such hope, there can be no victory over the enemies of our country, none over the enemies of God.

But the Apostle goes on to express where it is that Christian victory differs, not only from earthly victory, but even from the spiritual victories of any other religion besides itself. 'Be not conquered by evil, but conquer evil by good.'

I. Let us go through the different meanings of which these words are capable. The first is that in which especially the Apostle uses them. He had warned his readers to live peaceably with all men; with all—even with the heathen Romans, even with their Jewish persecutors. He had told them that vengeance was God's, not theirs; that the only vengeance a Christian could take upon his enemy was to give him food if he was hungry, and drink if he was thirsty. They were not to allow themselves to be overcome by his evil; they were to overcome and conquer his evil by their good.

Such a victory is not what can be won in the battles of earthly warfare; there, evil must be met by evil, sword by sword, fire by fire, death by death. Such a victory is not what could be won by 'them of old times,' under the Jewish dispensation, who were to 'hate their enemies,' and to claim 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'

But such is the victory of which the Apostle speaks, which our Saviour achieved in the highest degree, which, in their measure, Christians are to win over all their various enemies. It was a wise maxim of ancient military tactics: 'Always make a silver bridge for a flying enemy.' It is no less a maxim of Christian wisdom and Christian charity: Make silver bridges for those who seek to retrieve their errors, their mistakes, their wrongs. Do not raise obstacles in the way of the returning penitent, whether penitent towards God or towards man. This is the true Christian vengeance, the true Christian victory over those who wrong or offend us. Charity, no less than honesty, is the best policy, and also the noblest revenge.

II. Such is the original application of the Apostle's words; but the position which they occupy at the close of his precepts, and the solemnity of the words themselves, justifies us in giving them a wider application. 'Be not conquered by evil, but conquer evil by good.' How true, how wise, how consoling is this precept, when we apply it to our dealings with evil in all its manifold aspects, in the world at large, in others, in ourselves!

1. There are many examples of this mode of warfare and of this mode of conquest. Take the case of error in belief. Consider what an endless task it would be to refute every folly and heresy in detail; what heartburning, what bitterness every such attack leaves behind! how unprofitable to those attacked, how unprofitable to those who attack, how unprofitable to those who witness the attack! Doubtless, there are times when controversy becomes a necessary evil. But let us remember that it is an evil. 'Conquer evil by good. Conquer falsehood by truth.' Set forth the light, and the darkness will flee before it. Take care of the truth, and the errors will take care of themselves. You may destroy a hundred heresies, and yet not establish a single truth. But you may, by establishing a single truth, put to flight with one blow a hundred heresies.

2. Again, there is this advantage in conducting such a warfare, whether against moral evil or mental error; that there is always, if I may so speak, a traitor, an innocent traitor, within the camp, if we knew how to address him rightly. Every widespread error contains a concealed truth. This is the point on which we must fasten, if we wish to overthrow the error. In every human being there is a spark of good. That is the spark which, by bringing the light of good-

ness near it, we shall cause to explode, and shatter the whole fortress of evil which has been raised over it. The Good Shepherd saw that the lost sheep was worth saving. God saw that there was something in man not wholly lost and depraved, and therefore He came to make the best of it, to restore it, to save it.

III. And now for a moment turn from the dealings with others to dealings with ourselves. There also the Apostle's rule applies: If we wish to overcome evil, we must overcome it by good. There are doubtless many ways of overcoming the evil in our own hearts, but the simplest, easiest, most universal, is to overcome it by active occupation in some good word or work. Leisure misused, an idle hour waiting to be employed, idle hands with no occupation, idle and empty minds with nothing to think of; these are the main temptations to evil. Fill up that empty void, employ those vacant hours, occupy those listless hands, and evil will depart; because it has no place to enter in, because it is conquered by good. The best antidote to evil of all kinds, against the evil thoughts that haunt the soul, against the needless perplexities which distract the conscience, is to keep hold of the good we have. Impure thoughts will not stand against pure words, and prayers, and deeds. Little doubts will not avail against great certainties. Fix your affections on things above, and then you will less and less be troubled by the cares, the temptations, the troubles, of things on earth.

IV. This leads us to the last sense in which it is most of all true that we are called to conquer evil by good. It is not enough to rely on the good within ourselves; we must look to the good without ourselves. What that highest good is we all know. But do we sufficiently remember how in the thought of that highest good, in the communion with God in Christ, lies not only our peace and safety, but our victory over evil? Above all, we must look to Him who, above all other names, is called 'Jesus'—that is, our 'Joshua,' our Conqueror, our victorious Leader, the Captain of our salvation, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. It is told of the Emperor Constantine that he, the founder of the first Christian Empire, the first of Christian sovereigns, was converted to the faith of Christ by a vision which appeared to him at the head of his armies—a vision of a flaming cross, in the centre of which was written, in almost the very same Greek words which the Apostle here uses: 'In this,' or 'By this conquer.' The story itself is encompassed with doubt, but in a figure it conveys to us a true lesson. 'In this conquer' should still be our motto. 'In this,' in the Cross of Christ, the highest 'good' which God has revealed to man, 'in this conquer.' Conquer, because the Cross of Christ shows us what is God's love to His creatures. Conquer, because it shows us what is the highest call of man. Con-

quer, because it shows us the strength and the firmness, the gentleness and mercy, the suffering and the victory in which, and through which, we too are to be victorious. A. P. STANLEY.

III. OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL.

Universalising the Christ.

And the centurion answered and said . . . Say the word only and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this one Go, and he goeth; and to another Come, and he cometh; and to my servant Do this, and he doeth it. And when Jesus heard it he marvelled, and said, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, but the sons of the Kingdom shall be cast forth. S. MATTHEW viii. 8-12 (R.V.).

PIPHANY, or 'manifestation,' is the characteristic idea underlying the whole of the gospel message. The gospel is not the proclamation of a transformation in God, but the unveiling by an object-lesson of the never-changing character, and attitude towards the world, of the Infinite Originator of all things. Epiphany, or manifestation, implies the being of that which is manifested before it is made known. When the light from some far-distant star first reaches the earth, it does not then, for the first time, begin to be; it has been shining for tens of thousands of years; but it is then, for the first time, epiphanised or manifested on the earth. When the Eternal Word, or Reason of the Father, 'became Flesh and dwelt amongst us,' that the human mind might form its conceptions of God under familiar conditions of thought, that phase of God's character embodied in Jesus did not then first begin to be, it always was; it then first was objectively, unmistakably manifested.

I. This is the gospel; it is God's answer coming forth from Infinity to a universal demand of the race. All thinking men everywhere have been more or less conscious of

> 'Those high instincts before which our mortal
> Nature doth tremble like a guilty thing surprised.'

The attraction, the power, the fascination of the gospel is that it gathers up these world-wide, age-long instincts of anthropomorphism and satisfies them wholly in the person of one who was 'God manifest in flesh.' 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father' is

His witness. 'Ye sin-oppressed, bereaved, sorrow-stricken ones, unable to find healing for your heart-wounds in the immensity and vagueness of Omnipotent Absolute Substance, come unto Me and I will give you rest.' 'No man cometh unto the Father except through Me'—that is, 'No mortal will learn wholly and confidingly to trust the Father-nature of God except as it is manifested in Me. Come, therefore, unto Me, and I will give you rest.'

II. Obviously, when this transcendent embodiment of the heart and character of the Most High first came amongst men, His interior relations with the Omnipotent Parent-Source could be only very gradually received and assimilated. 'Why,' asked scoffers twenty centuries ago, 'Why,' ask doubters to-day—'Why dost not Thou tell us plainly?' Why? Because it is to the inward nature, the faculty of spiritual discernment, that He ever appeals—this He stimulated by suggestion, and illuminated by spiritual influence, unveiling truth, as men were able to receive it, ever declaring that there was more to know which they could not then bear, but that His influence, or Holy Spirit, should continue to inspire the thoughts of men, leading them on to the whole truth. Moreover, in consideration for the then condition of the world, which required every new teacher to verify his mission by signs, He aroused the attention of men to His identity with the God of Nature by evidences of complete familiarity with nature's secrets, which, because they were in advance of experience, were called miracles. These signs the gospels of the Epiphany season collect, record, and emphasise. And not one is more pregnant with spiritual suggestiveness than this sign of the healing of the Centurion's servant.

'Thou,' said the Centurion, 'hast only to speak the word of command and the thousands and one ills to which flesh is heir will fly to do Thy bidding.' True; then together with power and knowledge goes responsibility; and the assurance that such a God as our God, not the silent abstraction behind phenomena, but the God of Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and Calvary could wipe out the world's miseries and does not, is incontrovertible proof that the children of men cannot be fitted to be 'for ever with the Lord,' which is their ultimate destiny, without the discipline of sorrow; that mentally to snatch the reins of government out of His hand because of the dark shadow of pain in the universe is short-sighted, faithless, atheistic; that in a sense hereafter to be explained, pain, perplexity, sorrow, are angel messengers.

III. Christianity is not a new religion, but the concentration, the focus, the fulfilment of all religions since the world was; it is the unfolding in the fulness of time of the beautiful blossom, assimilating all that was best, noblest, and truest in the God-ward thinking of all

ages. S. Paul saw this when he said, 'The gospel which ye have heard was preached to every creature under heaven,'—that is, the Word now known to you as Jesus, has been uttering Himself in every human instinct that led men to look upwards. S. Peter learnt it, and declared, 'in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted.' Augustine saw it, for he says, 'The thing itself which is now called the Christian religion was really known to the ancients, nor was wanting at any time from the beginning of the human race.' Justin Martyr knew it, for he says, 'Those who lived according to the Logos' (or Word of the Father, in the fulness of time incarnate in Jesus), 'were really Christians, though some have thought them atheists; such were Socrates and Heraclitus.'

We can universalise the Christ by enlarging our sympathies for all sorts and conditions of men; we can force ourselves out of the narrow, cramping, social and religious circles which are pinching us into meaner souls every year we live; we can be more liberal, more tolerant, more compassionate; we can make for the world's nobility rather than for its degradation; we can refuse to grasp unrighteous gains, and if we are the fortunate recipients of large dividends, we can resolve to ascertain whether we are profiting by the sweating of luckless *employés*, or by pandering to vices which undermine and destroy the commonwealth. In this vast Empire-city, with its area of seven hundred square miles, with its five million inhabitants, with enormous wealth side by side with its army of paupers numerically sufficient to fill every house in Brighton, there is constant crying need for the remedial labours of God-consecrated men and women who believe that 'all souls are the Lord's.' We can turn faith into action, creed into conduct, orthodoxy into activity.

CANON WILBERFORCE.

The Centurion's Faith.

I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. S. MATTHEW viii. 9.

THESE words of the Centurion describe the condition of mankind at large. Every man is under authority, having soldiers under him. There are powers above him to which he must yield obedience, and there is a sphere in which he himself rules, and others obey him.

Acted on as man is by powers outside and beyond himself, he feels that he too has powers to act on the world around him. Man is continually turning the forces of nature to his own account. He can even do much towards changing the climate of a country. The field-labourer in ploughing and sowing makes the earth bring forth fruit which it would never have brought forth without his labour, that is,

without the exercise of his power over nature. Man is under authority, but he has soldiers under him.

I. We see then that man is constrained by the forces which act on him according to inevitable laws, and that he in his turn constrains certain parts of his surroundings and makes them obey his will. But this is far from being a complete account of the nature of man. Beyond all this region of natural law, where force and necessity seem to rule, there is another region in which power of another kind is exercised, which we call moral authority, where the word is not 'you must' but 'you ought,' a power that is not of necessity but of duty. And here we see the true freedom and dignity of man. He belongs to the natural creation, he exists by virtue of the Divine fiat, 'Let us make man:' but he also belongs to the spiritual world; he has that in him which claims kinship with the very nature of God Himself; he mirrors in himself the divine personality and the divine freedom, for he is what he is as the result of the divine counsel—'Let us make man in our Image.'

God is alone the perfectly free personal Being; and in making man in His own image He endowed him with personality, with self-consciousness, with the power of choice. And these gifts come to man through the Eternal Son. For He, the Only-begotten, is 'the Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His substance,' and through Him man received the seal of the Divine Image, and was called to be a son of God. For we also are God's offspring. We have not received the spirit of bondage, but the spirit of adoption. We are called to freedom, not to slavery, to the willing obedience of free men, not to the forced compliance of slaves. Duty does not enslave, it sets free.

But if we have to recognise and to obey lawful authority, we need also to exercise it in our turn. The Ego, the very central self of man, while recognising an authority not its own which it ought to obey, is also conscious of an authority which is its very own in the same moral sphere. And it must command as well as obey. God has given man dominion, not only over nature, but, which is far greater, over himself. All our faculties, our bodily strength and skill, our understanding and memory, our affections and passions, are as soldiers put under us to be commanded and directed. Too often these soldiers of ours are undisciplined and rebellious; with some it is more like a rabble than a regiment we have in charge. We are not like the Centurion with his soldiers; we say Go, Come, Do this, but we are not obeyed. Why is this? It is because we ourselves have failed in obedience. We have violated the true principle of discipline, in that we have rebelled against lawful authority, and our subjects have therefore rebelled against us.

II. Failure to obey this law of duty of which we have spoken is sin. And sin, which is rebellion against the authority of God, brings about a rebellion of the faculties of our nature against ourselves, and this rebellion in the natural course of things is so successful that these very faculties, or some of them, often the lowest of them, become our masters, and we become their slaves.

III. Man's perfection, then, consists not in independence but in obedience, the obedience of children, freely rendered to the Perfect Being, in whose image he was made, and to whose likeness he is being conformed. But this power or privilege of sonship needs to be put in action. Just as man's natural faculties do not work of themselves, but need to be put forth under the direction of the will, so the powers of the spiritual life must be exercised or they will be useless. They are not a dead treasure to be hoarded, they are faculties of life to be put forth. And one of the conditions of life spiritual, as of life natural, so far as we are acquainted with it, is that it has to grow and develop in the face of obstacles and hindrances. In order to overcome the obstacles in the way of our perfection we need training or discipline. And the true principle of discipline is that expressed by the Centurion: he is under authority, having soldiers under him. If we would command we must learn to obey. We cannot discipline our faculties rightly so as to render them really useful in carrying out the purpose of our being—we cannot have our soldiers really under us—unless we acknowledge that we ourselves are under authority.

IV. To give due weight to the word 'ought' is not easy. There are difficulties and hindrances. And therefore we need discipline or training. Let me refer to three kinds of discipline, three ways in which God wills that we should be trained for the perfect life to which He calls us. There is the discipline of work, the discipline of temptation, the discipline of self-denial.

1. The discipline of work. By steadfast, patient, persevering work we are to cultivate the garden of the soul which God has committed to each one to dress and to keep. And in your work you are not alone. You are called to work together with God. I do not mean in what are called religious works, but in the daily work of each in the world. It ought all to be done heartily as unto the Lord. And realising the dignity and responsibility of your work you will 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to work, for His good pleasure.'

2. The discipline of temptation. An important part of our training comes through the evil which surrounds us, which God overrules for our good. We pray 'Lead us not into temptation,' and we dare not run into it, or put ourselves in the way of it. But it is allowed

to come to us in the Providence of God, and He promises to us the grace we need in order to resist it, if we are faithful in fighting against it and relying on His help. By resisting temptation we become strong in the Lord, and prove the truth of the saying of S. James, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.'

3. The discipline of self-denial. As in work and in temptation, so here, the Lord is our pattern. 'If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.' His self-denial, leading up to the great Sacrifice of the Cross, seems far out of our reach; and in one sense it is so, for 'no man may deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him.' That is the sole prerogative of the Incarnate God. But the virtue of that cross is to hallow all our daily life, and we may find in the trivial round and the common task, room to deny ourselves and so to follow Him.

BISHOP HICKS.

Faith the Measure of Help.

As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. S. MATTHEW viii 13.

FAITH is the one principle of our Reformed and Protestant Church. By it, instrumentally, a man is justified. By it a Christian man lives; by it he dies. All that is ever good in us comes, instrumentally, by faith. A man who has no faith, no true, no living, no working faith, is a lost man. With faith goes hope: and a man without hope, what is he in a sinful, a suffering, and a storm-tossed world? Thus there is no topic on which we require to be more clearly instructed, more often questioned and exhorted and warned, than this one of a true faith; what it is, how it may be known, and who (in the true sense) possesses it.

I. Faith, in general, is the opposite of sight. We walk by faith, not by sight. Faith is spiritual sight, as opposed to bodily. Faith is seeing the invisible. It is the confidence of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. In a lower sense it operates in everything. It is the basis of every process of husbandry, and of every step in education. He who sows for a harvest sows in faith. He is acting upon a sight of something invisible. He sees in his mind a day some months distant, when this grain of corn which he is dropping upon the earth will be reappearing in a strangely altered, in a now at last productive form. That is faith, in things natural and earthly. Therefore let not a Christian be called an enthusiast simply because he walks by faith. Where would the world be without faith? What a standstill of all things useful and serviceable

for the life that is, if faith is to be discarded! Faith is the sight, the mental or spiritual sight, of things unseen.

But thus far it has no Christian aspect. Faith in a harvest may quicken dependence upon God, and thankfulness to God, and other moral and religious feelings; but it does nothing more towards the saving of the soul.

Christian faith is seeing Christ; seeing Him with the mind's eye; seeing Him when He is out of sight: seeing Him as He really is, in His person, in His character, in His work for us, in His resurrection life and power. It was not seeing Christ in the body which healed the leper or the Centurion's servant. It was the passing through the bodily sight of Him to the spiritual. It was the conviction that this Man standing before them was something else too. Depend upon it, it was the very same grace with that faith to which we are called. It was not an easy thing to see God in the form of a Man. It was just as difficult as to see God now in Christ, when there is no form before us. Faith in Christ then, and faith in Christ now, is one and the selfsame thing; the being convinced that He is, and what He is; the being convinced that He, our Lord Jesus Christ, lives now, at this moment, and has all power in heaven and in earth; lives after death and resurrection, after bearing our sins and taking them away; lives as our High Priest, as our Intercessor, as our Mediator and Advocate with God.

II. Be assured that one deep heartfelt prayer to Christ, on the basis of His being and of His atonement, is worth whole months and years of study of evidences apart from this contact. It is for want of that intercourse, of soul with soul and spirit with spirit, that we continue speculators in truth, instead of living members of Christ's body.

Faith grows, like hope, like love, by converse. It is not an easy thing to see the invisible. It is not an easy thing to get the seen outshone by the unseen, and the temporal overborne by the eternal. That is the task set before us. We must learn so to live as that the will of Christ shall be stronger in us than the self-will, and the word of Christ more persuasive than the word of the world and of the devil. If we live not this life, which is the life of faith, how can we die that death, which is the death of the faithful? We must know Christ well now, or we cannot hope to have Him for our stay in the dark valley. Prayer, and meditation, and reading God's Word, and attendance at Christ's holy table, are changed from irksome duties into attractive invitations, as soon and in proportion as we can regard them as means of growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If they are neglected, or listlessly and thanklessly and grudgingly used, it is because we are looking upon

them from the wrong side; because we do not long for a stronger faith and a clearer light in things heavenly, or do not believe God's love to us in providing ordinances of strength and comfort for His feeble and fainting and flagging children. Let us use each as His gift to us; His gracious gift of a new opportunity of communing and conversing with an unseen Friend and Saviour; of growing in the personal knowledge of Him whom to know for ourselves is eternal life; and assuredly the place will be too strait for us, and the time too short and too rare, of hearing and worshipping: the desire of our souls will be to the Name of God and to the remembrance of Him!

DEAN VAUGHAN.

IV. OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS.

Practical Devotion to the Church of Christ.

For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee. ISAIAH lxii. 5.

ISAIAH is looking across the centuries, not only at the still future exile, but at much beyond it. The exile indeed, with its sore burden of misery and humiliation, its agony and suspense, its abrupt and triumphant close, is so altogether present to him, that he lives in it as in a world which is actually his own; he lives in it so entirely for the time being that those moderns who, on *a priori* grounds, find a difficulty in understanding how a human soul could be endowed with this supernatural gift of vivid realisation of a strictly distant future, have pictured to themselves a later unknown prophet who must have witnessed the scenes which the real prophet foresaw. It is on the recovery from this scene of suffering and shame that Isaiah's eye is now fixed, and one token of the glory and completeness of this recovery is the enthusiasm with which the restored city will inspire her sons. She will appear in their eyes not only venerable as a mother, but beautiful as a bride; she will command at their hands not merely the reverence and gratitude and service of dutiful children, but that more tender and soul-absorbing passion which a young man gives to the mistress of his heart. 'As a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee.'

The prophet's language is undoubtedly bold, and its audacity consists in this, that it seems to make too large a demand on human feeling. At first sight we may think it improbable, if not impossible, that the human heart and will can ever pay to a cause, a society, a

country, a church, an abstract and impalpable object of any kind—that debt of tender, disinterested passion which may be paid to another human being. 'As a young man marrieth a virgin;' what can be more concrete and intelligible? 'So shall thy sons,' O restored Jerusalem, 'marry thee'; here reality seems to fade away under the shadow of metaphor: it is difficult to see how any real parallel can exist between an intellectual interest or reasoned sense of duty to a public cause or institution, although prescribing exertion and even sacrifice, and the spontaneous, glowing, fervid devotion of a young man to his chosen bride.

Say you so; then let me say that as yet you know not some salient features of human nature. As a matter of fact abstractions, as we call them, do provoke passion; the passion of love and the passion of hate, no less truly than do concrete and visible objects. Millions of human beings have worked, suffered, fought and died for these very abstractions; for a political or social doctrine, for the fame of a fallen dynasty, for the credit of some secret club or association, for a country that has been crushed out of existence, for some wild undemonstrable theory, for some baseless or grotesque superstition, no less than for a true and soul-inspiring faith or principle. Like the road from Samaria to the fords of Jordan, after the Syrian retreat, the highways of history are strewn with the abandoned relics of failure and disaster—relics which show how mighty is the power of causes which we may deem abstract and intangible to move men to the greatest efforts, and to stir the most passionate emotions of the human heart.

Isaiah's comparison would suggest that the devotion of her sons to the city of God would have three characteristics.

I. It would be, first of all, an unreserved, whole-hearted devotion; a devotion which bestows on its object its best and its all. 'With my body I thee worship; and with all my worldly goods I thee endow,' is the language not only of a Christian Church formulary, but of the human heart in its better mood throughout all time; and it marks the first characteristic of that devotion to the Church of God which Isaiah saw in vision across the centuries.

Undoubtedly a partial fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy may be recognised in the love and service which Israel after the flesh received from a long line of patriot children. Noblest among them were the Maccabees; but they were only samples of a spirit which was shared, in their day and afterwards, by thousands of their countrymen. That temper was indeed too often mingled with moral alloy that sullied its purity. But the men who saved their country from the cultured Paganism of Antiochus Epiphanes, and who even after the utter ruin of their sacred house by Titus, rose once and again to pour out their

blood like water in an unavailing struggle with Imperial Rome at the epoch of its greatest military power, were assuredly not men only under the sway of a common or sordid motive. In their love to 'Jerusalem the Holy,' whose name was stamped upon their coins, they surely exhibit the careless self-abandonment of the passion which gives itself without stint to the object of its choice.

II. The devotion which Isaiah predicts will be not only complete, but disinterested. The true-hearted bridegroom marries, not that he may win rank or wealth, or public recognition, or any outward advantages whatever: he weds his bride for her own sake, because she is what she is, because in wedding her he finds the joy and satisfaction of his heart. It is 'for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health.' So was it also to be with the espousals of the soul. The Holy Bride is wooed for her own sake, and not for anything that she may bestow on those who would win her.

III. And the prophet's comparison suggests a devotion that will last till death. 'Till death us do part.' In our day men and even women are sometimes ready to raise the question whether the sacred obligation of the marriage tie is not to be pronounced a failure and might not be replaced by something which ought to be described in very plain and stern terms. To raise such questions at all is to forget the fundamental conditions of moral, social, and national well-being. As well might a sensible man propose to discuss the truth and worth of mathematical axioms, as a good man to question a thesis so essential to practical morality as is the obligatoriness of the marriage bond. 'What God hath joined together let not man put asunder.' Not less indissoluble is the tie which binds the conscience of Christ's ministers to their sacred service. The need for that service can never cease; the Divine Master who continuously expects it, cannot change or die; the cause which won its first fresh enthusiasms is and will be what it has ever been until the Lord comes. It may be lawful to retire from the ranks of an earthly army; but to forget the indelible character which consecration to ministerial work imprints upon the soul; to seek relief from so-called clerical disabilities, after years of service; this is indeed in the language of our Master, 'to look back after putting the hand to the plough.' Weariness, impaired health, diminished opportunities for usefulness may come with years; but the tie of sacred service to the cause and Church of Christ can only end with life.

It may be thought that this form of enthusiasm belongs to a day when the Old Testament had not yet been largely resolved by criticism into late forgeries or doubtful legends, and when the heroes of popular novels had not yet cast off the dust of their feet against the creed of Christendom. No, these features of our time do not

really affect the religious situation. Wait a little and you will see that, as after inquiry, to which Cambridge has added more than her share, the New Testament has survived Strauss, Baur, and Schwegler, so the Old will not finally go to pieces at the bidding of Kuenen and Wellhausen. All that negative criticism can do is to modify some incidental features of one traditional way of looking at Scripture; the main fabric remains intact. And as to the Christian Deism that is to supplant Christianity, if it only will think long and steadily enough, it will surely discover that no difficulties in the creed which it rejects are so great as those of faith in a Being who is still held to be All-good as well as All-knowing and All-mighty, but who yet, surveying this scene of moral misery and pain, has, on the hypothesis, left it to itself. These clouds which are passing over the spiritual heavens are indeed no real reason why a man should fail in devotion to the cause and Church of Christ.

How much might not be done for that dear and sacred cause, even by two or three undistinguished but resolute Christians! When Tacitus is describing the military revolt which raised Otho, for a brief interval, to the throne of the Roman world, he tersely says that two private soldiers undertook that the Imperial Power should be transferred to other hands, and they did transfer it, *Suscepere duo manipulares Imperium populi Romani transferendum: et transtulerunt.* The life of grace is not less equal to great efforts than are the energies of nature; and there are nobler works to be achieved in our brief life than promoting any change in the tenure of earthly power.

H. P. LIDDON.

God or Chance?

But ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget My holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink-offering unto that number. ISAIAH lxv. 11.

I NEVER remember to have seen or even to have heard of a sermon preached from this text; nor is that strange, for as it stands in our English Version it is all but unintelligible. Now let us give the passage its true rendering, and I think that it may convey to us a very solemn lesson. For it is 'that as for you that forsake His service, that prepare a table for fortune, and pour out the wine for destiny, I have destined you for the slaughter. Behold, My servants shall eat; but ye who prepare a table for fortune shall be hungry. Behold, My servants shall drink; but ye who pour out libations to destiny shall be thirsty. Behold, My servants shall rejoice; but ye who believe in luck shall be ashamed. Ye shall leave

your name for a curse. My servants shall bless themselves, and shall swear by the God of Amen—that is, the God of verity and of faithfulness.'

I. Now, then, you will see what the prophet means who wrote of the source of all faithfulness, the source of all strength, the basis of all religion, as the knowledge of and trust in the one living God. The apostate Jews had forgotten this. They were beginning to trust in the gods of the nations, to make banquets to the planet Jupiter, which they regarded as the star of fortune, and to pour libations to the planet Venus, which they regarded as the star of luck. Therefore God tells them that not these stars, not these idols, not these imaginary entities; but that He would be their destiny, and that He would deliver them, because fortune and destiny which they worshipped could guide them only to hunger, and thirst, and ruin; but His servants, they who trusted in Him, should never be ashamed; they should find Him to be their God, a God of blessing, a God of amen—yea, a faithful witness.

Such was the meaning of the passage to the few who heard it. Has it no meaning to us? Have we no similar temptation? To me the passage is full of the deepest lessons. It touches upon the very first commandment—'Thou shalt have none other gods but Me.' It emphasises the very first chapter of Genesis—'It is God that hath made us, and not we ourselves.' It is nothing short of a whole philosophy of history and a whole philosophy of life.

II. Now, I cannot speak of those who suppose that life is guided by what they call necessity, who regard human beings as mere automata, as creatures who only do this or that because they must, as blindly swayed by impulses for which they are not responsible, and which they cannot resist—it would take too long to speak of those now. But let me speak of those who, whatever they may say, in reality worship the unspiritual god of circumstances, who think that their lives are guided, not by a merciful controlling Father, but by blind luck, by capricious accident, by the hand of chance. The terms 'accident,' 'fortune,' 'luck,' play a vast part in the customs and literature of the world, but no part at all in Scripture. The very word 'chance,' properly speaking, is entirely absent alike from the Old and New Testament. It is, I suppose, belief in chance that gives its terrible fascination to that pestilent folly of gambling which has ruined so many thousands of Englishmen. It is one of the greatest temptations which men can go out of their way to create for themselves; it is temptation which I say even our most respectable newspapers tend to foster by publishing their betting lists, their horse-racing, and their sporting intelligence. It has brought many a fine estate to the hammer and to the axe; it has made many a shopman

rob his master's till; it has led many a clerk to forge the fatal signature; it has been the curse of many of those who lead lives of spendthrift idleness; it helps to ruin multitudes of those loafing and skulking youths of our back streets, who live all their lives on the very border-land of degradation, vice, and crime. The evidence that this betting and gambling are, in England, very largely on the increase, is, I grieve to say, abundant, disastrous, and almost universal; it has invaded the aristocratic palace, the social circle, the public-house, the workshop, the steamboat, the railway carriage, and even among the wretched inmates of the sweater's den of the East-end of London men may be seen night after night staking on the chances of the cards money that should have gone to buy food and clothing for their starving and shivering little ones. This dangerous folly is one against which every patriot citizen should, at this time, raise his warning voice: it is a pernicious thing, which it is the duty of every one of us to discountenance.

III. But let us look at this subject of the supposed government of life by chance from far wider points of view than these. For instance, it very closely affects our human history. The ancient nations believed in chance. They called it 'chance' or 'fortune' if one man got a crown as the prize of his wickedness and the other got a gibbet; they called it 'chance' if a battle lost which raised one ruler from a dungeon to a throne, cut down another from the throne to a dungeon. In this way they, as the prophet says, raised a table to fortune. What is history to you? Is it a mere ghastly phantasmagoria of human passions struggling together, or is it the unfolding of a great divine drama to a merciful issue? When King Nebuchadnezzar departed from Jerusalem we are told by the prophet Ezekiel that he used the divination which is called belomancy, or divining by arrows—he stood at the parting of the ways with a sheaf of arrows in his hand and let them fall, and in whichever direction most of the arrows fell, in that direction he marched. That was to leave the destiny of himself and of the country to what they were pleased to call chance. But the Christian believes that chance is nothing but God's unseen Providence, which is so misnamed by men. In the words of the great poet, 'Chance is nothing else but God *incognito*.'

How do men aud women painfully stricken sometimes curse the day of their life and are almost ready to blaspheme God! But what a difference when they have the grace to recognise that this may be in their own life but bitter aloes from the gentle hand of God! How should that thought come home to them like a sunbeam, glorifying the dull and misty earth! How does the resignation which comes from trust in God transmute all their sorrows into gold, ripen all that is best within them, get rid of all that is cursed, make their lives like

the sweet flowers that are most fragrant when they are most bruised and crushed! ARCHDEACON FARRAR.

'The God of the Amen.'

He who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth. ISAIAH lxv. 16.

THE full beauty and significance of these remarkable words are only reached when we attend to the literal rendering of a part of them which is obscured in our Version. As they stand in the original, they have, in both cases, instead of the vague expression, 'The God of truth,' the singularly picturesque one, 'The God of the Amen.'

I. Note the meaning of the name. Now, Amen is an adjective, which means literally firm, true, reliable, or the like. And, as we know, its liturgical use is that, in the olden time, and to some extent in the present time, it was the habit of the listening people to utter it at the close of prayer or praise. But besides this use at the end of somebody else's statement, which the sayer of 'Amen' confirms by its utterance, we also find it used at the beginning of a statement, by the speaker, in order to confirm his own utterance by the word.

And these two uses of the expression, reposing on its plain meaning, in the first instance signifying, 'I tell you that it is so;' and in the second instance signifying, 'So may it be!' or, 'So we believe it is,' underlie this grand title which God takes to Himself here, 'the God of the Amen,' both His Amen and ours. So that the thought opens up very beautifully and simply into these two, His truth and our faith.

I. First, it emphasises the absolute truthfulness of every word that comes from His lips. There is implied in the title, that He really has spoken, and declared to man something of His will, something of His nature, something of His purposes, something of our destiny. God's word is 'Amen!' man's word is 'perhaps.' For in regard of the foundation truths of man's belief and experience and need, no human tongue can venture to utter its own asseverations with nothing behind them but itself, and expect men to accept them; but that is exactly what God does, and alone has the right to do. His word absolutely, and through and through, in every fibre of it, is reliable and true.

But then, on the other hand, necessarily involved in this title, though capable of being separately considered, is not only the absolute truthfulness of the divine word, but also the thorough-going reliance on our parts which that word expects and demands. God's 'Amen,'

and 'Verily,' of confirmation, should ever cause the 'Amen' of acceptance and assent to leap from our lips.

II. Now notice, next, how this God of the Amen is, by reason of that very characteristic, the source of all blessing.

'He who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of Truth.' That phrase of blessing one's-self in, which is a frequent Old Testament expression, is roughly equivalent to invoking, and therefore receiving, blessing from. You find it, for instance, in the seventy-second Psalm, in that grand burst which closes one of the books of the Psalter, and hails the coming of the Messianic times, of which my text also is a prediction. 'Men shall be blessed in Him,' or, rather, 'shall bless themselves in Him,' which is a declaration that all needful benediction shall come down upon humanity through the coming Messias, as well as that men shall recognise in that Messias the source of all their blessing and good. So the text declares that, in those days that are yet to come, the whole earth shall be filled with men whose eyes have been purged from ignorance and sin, and from the illusions of sense and the fascinations of folly, and who have learned that only in the God of the Amen is the blessing of their life to be found.

III. Lastly, note how the God of the Amen should be the pattern of His servants.

'He that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth,' or, 'of the Amen.' The prophet deduces from the name the solemn thought that those who truly feel its significance will shape their words accordingly, and act and speak so that they shall not fear to call His pure eyes to witness that there are neither hypocrisy, nor insincerity, nor vacillation, nor the hidden things of dishonesty, nor any of the skulking meannesses of craft and self-seeking in them. 'I swear by the God of the Amen, and call Thy faithfulness to witness that I am trying to be like Thee.' This is what we ought to do if we call ourselves His children.

A. MACLAREN.

OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

Domestic Service.

A certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him. S. Luke vii. 2.

HERE are three chief points in the character of this Centurion. We will invert them for our present purpose, reaching last the first mentioned.

1. He was a man of faith. With a singular clearness—a clearness which drew from our Lord Himself an expression of wonder and admiration—he saw (what I may call) the naturalness of omnipotence; saw it not as a strange thing, but as a thing to be expected and assumed, that Christ the Son of God should possess the same authority over all things and all men, which he himself, a soldier in the Roman army, at once recognised and claimed by the mere regulation of a human discipline.

2. He was also a man of liberality. 'He loveth our nation,' the Jews said of him, 'and he hath built us a synagogue.' Placed by circumstances in the midst of a people not his own, he did not give himself the airs of a member of the ruling race; he did not wrap himself in his Roman pride, and despise the customs or oppress the natives of a land to which his military duty had consigned him: so far from it, he studied the evidences of their religion, gave due weight to its revelation of the one true God, incorporated himself with them in the exercises of their worship, and furnished out of his own private resources the expenses of a new house of prayer.

3. A third thing. This man's charity began at home. He was amiable in his family. He did not carry his light in his hand: it only shone through from within. His servant was dear to him. It was his love for his servant that brought him now to Jesus. It was this which disclosed his faith. He was not ashamed of feeling and showing an attachment to a tried and faithful servant. This is the trait in his character which I wish to notice. The man of faith, and the man of liberality, was also a man who loved his servant.

I. There is a strong tendency in human nature to take trusts as possessions and gifts as rights. We see it in everything.

1. God gives us the power of speech, and calls it man's glory. He designed it, no doubt, for high and sacred uses; to do good, and to speak His praise. He says, 'For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.' We

say, on the contrary, to quote from the Book of Psalms, 'Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?' We will speak as we will: good words if we will, or else bad words if we will: who shall prescribe to us, and who shall judge? We turn trusts into possessions.

2. And gifts we turn into rights. What a remarkable thing is this arrangement—divine shall we call it, or human?—of mastership and service! One man shall rule, and another shall serve. He shall do his life's work in the form of serving. He shall eat his bread by service. He shall just choose his service: if he will, he may change his service: but, where he is, and while he is, he shall be at another's call, at another's mercy. We take gifts as rights: amongst others, the gift of a subordination of ranks, the blessing of a servant's service.

II. There are many faults noticeable in rulers of families.

1. The first of these is injustice in the assignment of duties. An amount of work is thrown upon one servant, which is quite out of all proportion to time and strength. A young girl is hired into a large family, of which the chief burden is at once thrown upon her alone. Nursing and cleaning, cooking and waiting, perpetual calls and countless errands, all are accumulated upon the one person who, so far as age and strength, knowledge and experience, are concerned, is the least able to bear them. Whatever you could allow a daughter of your own to bear or to do at her age and in her condition, that, and that only, must you lay upon her. And if you say that, because you pay a servant, you have a right to be eased altogether of every inconvenient duty, I reply that there is a fallacy in such reasoning, for which the God of reason and of conscience must call you to a reckoning.

2. The second fault I would particularise is unreasonableness in the expectation of perfection. It has somehow come to be supposed that a servant must be perfect in order to keep a place. Children are full of faults, and up to any age. To the end you spare your son's frailties, even when they have run on into vices. But it is otherwise with your servants. They must be perfect; perfect in self-control, perfect in steadiness, perfect in temper, perfect in respectfulness. If they forget themselves but in one instance, they are not servants for you.

3. The third and last fault to be noticed is the chief and foremost of all, underlying indeed and embracing all the rest; negligence in the consideration of religious interests. The Centurion whose servant is dear to him, will certainly not suffer his *soul* to take injury. Cornelius 'feared God with all his house.' It was not enough for him to be 'a devout man:' he also took care to have 'devout' persons about him, and, that he might have them, by God's grace to make

them so. And therefore, when he wanted a religious errand done, he had at his side servants ready and suitable to perform it.

Is it not here that the radical fault lies? in a want of that fear of God which shows itself in the care of man?

On the Sunday, more especially, you will take pains so to arrange the household duties, that each member of it may have an opportunity of worshipping God, and hearing His word preached, without hurry and without distraction. You will regard it as a sacred duty, to see that no servant under your roof shall be able to plead impossibility in answer to the sacred summons to the house of prayer. 'Live and let live,' in the things of the soul as well as of the body. Let some little personal self-denial secure to your servant the opportunity of worshipping. DEAN VAUGHAN.

He could not be hid.

He could not be hid. S. MARK vii. 24.

VERY many are the conditions of this earthly life, which have been sanctified by the earthly life of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Thus the life of poverty, the life of toil, the life of sorrow, have each their sacred aspect now, inasmuch as they reflect, however dimly, the poverty and toil and sorrow of the life of Jesus.

In the words of the text that sacred life is revealed to us as one of great physical weariness.

As truly Man as He was 'Very God,' there were times when the Saviour, in utter weariness of the flesh, longed for quiet and for rest —that perfect rest which seclusion alone can give: which is always so welcome to the weary, and yet was so often denied Him, because He was One who 'could not be hid!'

I. The life of Jesus was not only the life of One who was always busy, but it was a painfully public Life. Not only did each day bring its own load of work for men's bodies and for men's souls; but through the livelong day the multitudes, in their selfish eagerness, thronged and pressed Him; some in idlest curiosity, and some with tales of sorrow, some, indeed, with feelings of devotion. And—that which made it tenfold more weary work—there was ever a knot of malicious, watchful ones, full of bitterness, watching Him every moment; listening for every word that fell from His blessed lips; eager to catch up something against Him, to accuse Him to the civil power; to hunt Him to His death.

When the stings and worries of life weary us, when we are tempted to be fretful and impatient, let the thought of the tired, patient Christ rise up before us to rebuke us; let us hear Him speaking,

'I was weary, too.' Let us try to feel that the weariness which comes from honest toil, from work done for God, is a divine thing, for Christ was so often weary.

II. But though the words have something pathetic in them, yet viewed from another point they are words which are full of a wondrous dignity also, as showing us One who, though He was man, yet was something much more also; One in whom dwelt 'the fulness of the Godhead bodily,' and who for that reason 'could not be hid!' The dim light of a candle may be hid under a bushel, but the blackest clouds of the most tempestuous day that ever dawned cannot shut out the brightness of the glorious sun. The Sun of Righteousness had risen upon a dark and sinful earth, and His light 'could not be hid.'

And so, though of all poor cradles in Jerusalem at the world's first Christmastide, that manger cradle in Bethlehem was the poorest and meanest, though men saw there only one of many poor and unknown babes, yet *that* Babe could not be hid. Angel voices sent shepherds to adore Him. A star of wondrous brilliancy led the Magi from their distant homes to worship before the manger throne.

Though, as far as men could see, that was only a poor mother passing through the streets of Jerusalem, now in the sunlight, now under the shadow of the houses, carrying in its poor wrappings her little one to the Temple of God; though passers-by neither knew nor cared who that Babe might be, yet 'He could not be hid!' The Lord had 'suddenly come to His Temple.' Simeon and Anna, led thither by the Spirit of God, recognise in the Child the Prince of the House of David, and the aged Prophet pours forth his glad 'Nunc Dimittis'—'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word. For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation!'

III. This same Jesus who is gone into heaven cannot be hid now. You see Him everywhere; in His works, in His word, in the blessed Sacrament, in the lives of good men. In your hearts you hear Him; He cannot be hid.

In this life of shadows we cannot indeed see the Saviour face to face. He must needs hide Himself, because of our human weakness, beneath the veils of sacramental mist. The hardened, the impenitent, the graceless, pass by, and see Him not. Faith pierces the veil, and cries, 'My Lord and my God!'

J. B. C. MURPHY.

The Manifestation of Jesus in Power.

(*The Epistle and Gospel for the Day.*)

THE manifestation of Jesus in power is the theme of the gospel for the Third Sunday. The healing of the Centurion's servant, here recorded, was a marvellous act of divine power, and dis-

tinguishable in several respects from other acts of healing. It was called forth (1) by the very striking faith, not of the sufferer himself, but of another person, and (2) this person not one of the chosen race, but a Gentile. The power of vicarious faith to obtain benefits for another is brought forward in this case, as in that of the Syrophenician woman, and is a highly interesting subject of reverent consideration (S. Mark vii. 26).

Of the epistle, peacefulness and forgiveness of spirit are the subjects.

'As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.'

'Avenge not yourselves, but . . . overcome evil with good.'

Healing of the Centurion's servant (S. Matt. viii. 10).

(*a*.) The Centurion expressed himself unworthy to receive Christ.

S. Francis d'Assisi used to repeat and dwell each day upon this thought: 'I am unworthy of the daylight which is around me, of the air which I breathe, of the bread which I eat, and the water which I drink, of the clothes which cover me; I am unworthy of every enlightenment of soul, of every good impulse in my heart, of every grace and consolation, of every happiness while living in this world, and of seeing God in the other. But of what am I worthy? of all evils; of desolation, of dryness, of sufferings, of all infirmities, of all scorn, of eternal fire!'

One of the best means of acquiring humility is to engrave deeply in our soul this rule: No man is anything really, except that which he is before God; and he is nothing more than this.

We have heard, as the gospel was read, the praise of our faith as manifested in our humility. For when the Lord Jesus promised that He would go to the Centurion's house to heal his servant, he answered: 'I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word, and he shall be healed.' By calling himself unworthy, he showed himself worthy for Christ to come, not into his house, but into his heart. Nor would he have said this with so great faith and humility, had he not borne Him in his heart, of whose coming into his house he was afraid. For it were no great happiness for the Lord Jesus to enter into his house, and yet not to be in his heart. For this Master of Humility, both by word and example, sat down even in the house of a certain proud Pharisee, by name Simon; and though He sat down in his house, there was no place in his heart, where the Son of Man could lay His head.

(*b*) That humility was united with a perfect faith in Christ's power to heal (ver. 10).

It was a very great thing for a man who was out of the list of the Jewish people to admit so great a thought. For he did no less than imagine to himself, as it seems to me, the armies in heaven; or that

the diseases and death, and everything else, were so subject to Him, as his soldiers to himself.

Wherefore he said likewise, 'For I also am a man set under authority;' that is, Thou art God, and I am man; I under authority, but Thou not under authority. If I, therefore, being a man, and under authority, can do so much: far more He, both as God, and as not under authority.

(*c*) The unsought reward which the faith and humility of the Centurion obtained.

It is said of the celebrated theologian, Tauler (died 1361), that he once, in a country walk, talked to a poor shepherd, with whose great piety and faith in God's goodness he was astonished, and found it to exceed that of the greatest of men. At length the shepherd told him, 'The consolation that I have in doing the holy will of God renders me truly happy; I desire in all things that which God wills; and to that I hold, for I am sure that He will permit nothing except for my greatest good.'

In order to try him, Tauler replied: 'But if God willed to precipitate you into hell, what would you do?'

Answer—'I know that God will not do it: but in any case, I have two arms, and I would hold Him so tightly that I would draw Him with me: and if I am with God, I should be in Paradise.'

Tauler—'Who are you, my dear friend?'

Answer—'I am a king.'

Tauler—'And where is your kingdom?'

Answer—'In my heart.'

Tauler—'What do you mean by reigning?'

Answer—'To rule over subjects.'

Tauler—'And who are your subjects?'

Answer—'They are my passions: and I endeavour to strive with them, and to bring them into entire obedience to the will of God.'

Tauler—'Ah, my friend, how happy you are!'

Answer—'Every one may begin to be happy in this world: but we shall not be perfectly so until the next world.' S. J. EALES.

Forgiveness of Enemies.

Rom. xii. 20, *etc.*

THE epistle for last week might be said to be on the subject of our duties to each other in the household of God and among friends; but that of to-day rather of our conduct among enemies. 'Be not wise in your own conceits,' for that is the origin of all ill-will to others. 'Recompense to no man evil for evil.' To no man, what-

ever he may be, is it lawful in a Christian to return evil. 'Provide things honest in the sight of all men.'

'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.' This passage is taken from the Book of Proverbs, and is difficult to understand. S. Chrysostom seems to think that the former part is addressed to the good Christian, exhorting him to do good to his enemy, leaving all requital to God; but that the latter part, of 'heaping coals of fire on his head,' is intended to alarm and warn the other, who is unkind to him who has forgiven and loved him. For, doubtless, the sin against God must in that case be very grievous. But S. Augustine more than once, in speaking of this text, says, that as of course it cannot mean that we are to do good to our enemy in order to bring down the vengeance of God upon him, which would be the part of malevolence, not of Christian good-will; it must be understood figuratively, by these means—you will melt your enemy by the fire of God's love, the coals from His altar, which we may consider to be the love of Christ crucified; you will bring down his proud head to repentance. And the followiug verse seems to favour this interpretation, 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'

But the verse going before suggests rather the former explanation: 'Vengeance is mine,' saith the Lord; 'therefore do good to thine enemy, and let him fear the recompense of God;' for, doubtless, very fearful is the condition of him who forgives not another who has forgiven him.

I. WILLIAMS.

The First Commandment.

And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. EXODUS XX. 1, 2.

THE first and the greatest aim in the education of Israel is covered by this proposition. The chosen nation, in order to do the work set before them, to fulfil their high destiny, must be monotheists. Their highest trust, their greatest privilege, as well as their absolute qualification for the work before them was to have only one God.

I. This end is strictly kept in view in the First Commandment—they would become monotheists by owning no other God. No formal creed asserting the unity of God is put before them; it is not said there is one God and none else; nothing is said here of the claims of other gods; there is no discussion raised or attempted to be raised about their existence or non-existence, for the simple reason that the

people were not fit for anything of the kind. The Egyptians had their gods, the Moabites had their deities, the other heathen tribes had theirs, but nothing is here said about them—no proof is attempted of their inferiority nor even any assertion made about them. The issue is clear, definite, unmistakeable. To the only question which could be raised, Who is the one God? the answer is clear: 'I who brought thee out of the land of Egypt.'

The subsequent history of Israel may be described as one long struggle on the part of all that was best and noblest and wisest in the Jewish nation to preserve this greatest trust. Long and weary was the struggle—for centuries the divided hearts and wayward wills of the people led them into every form of polytheism. It is almost ludicrous, if it were not so piteous, to read the histories of their childish backslidings. Any god whom another nation worshipped was the god for them. And this going after other gods began even in the desert. 'The desert is monotheistic,' says M. Renan in one of his grandiose French phrases; but as a matter of fact their first sin there was to worship the calf; and after they had been living for years in the desert, they had to be punished for worshipping the gods of the Moabites. Their whole history from beginning to end is stained with idolatry; now it was the golden calves—now it was Astarte and the host of heaven—now it was deities in groves, on hills, and under every green tree, 'the tabernacle of Moloch, the star of Remphan.' Their laws made stoning the penalty of idolatry, but laws had no power against the instincts of a people. And through it all, like a man taming a wild animal, Jehovah bore with them. The pity, the long-suffering, the tenderness, the patience of God is nowhere more transparently revealed to us than in His dealing with Israel on this question. He is the true Father, who sees that the one only thing that matters to His children is that they should own Him; and who recks nothing of their affliction if only He can bring them to their true self; He is the Father whose ear is ever open, whose heart is ever yearning. And they are a stiff-necked generation all through the long struggle, only at last brought to reason and sense by two captivities—'they did always resist the Holy Ghost'—they always persecuted the prophets, and at last they were only brought by bitter suffering to acknowledge what they ought to have esteemed their highest trust and their deepest treasure—the knowledge of the One true God.

II. The historical interest of the gradual growth of Jewish monotheism must always be great, but has the story any practical value for us? Are we at liberty merely to gaze on that long and interesting struggle for liberty of some oppressed nation like the Poles; as though it were an experience into which we cannot enter, whose

results we have only to enjoy? Has the First Commandment nothing to say to us? To us Astarte is a name, and the calf is a mere thing of stone. We have never seen an idol except perhaps in a museum, and then have only gazed in smiling contempt at the thought that any one could be so utterly silly as to worship a thing like that.

There are still 'gods many and lords many,' and it is in the giving of our allegiance to these that we, like the Jews, break the First Commandment. The Jewish religion has been described as the negation of polytheism. Christianity is that also, and something more too; but he would be a bold man who would say the need of a negation of polytheism had passed away.

Is our allegiance really given to the Father, to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to God whom Christ manifests, to the Heavenly Father, the Father of yourself and all men, in whom we are brethren?

Is there not a danger and a dread lest we satisfy ourselves with giving no allegiance to any false god; is there not a danger and a dread that though we worship no false gods, neither law nor humanity nor the absolute in nature nor aught else, we have still forgotten our Heavenly Father; that when we come to worship Him there is no reverence, no self-giving, no fire, only a dreamy contemplation of self or others; that, when we sin, we do not fear Him? We hate to be humiliated by the bad opinion of others, but we do not fear His eye. If we lost God from our creed, would anything be really taken from us? Should we not go on much as we do, paying visits, receiving visits, gossiping, trifling, frittering away our time in nothing that is worth doing? We should miss no light on our sorrows, or restraint on our pleasures; the sunlight and the darkness of life would remain. Ah, let us look deeper; we shrink from the unbeliever, we pity the idolater, perhaps we shudder at the atheist. Have we ourselves barred the doors against God by a strange reluctance to think of Him, to own Him? Have we ceased to think of Him till He has faded into a name, a shadow, a memory? May it not be the case that we have no other god before Him, because we have no god at all?

R. EYTON.

VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

Christian Feeling towards Enemies.

Rom. xii. 20.

At Tamatave, on the eve of the bombardment (by the French), all the natives, from the governor downwards, were at a prayer-meeting, and 'there were no prayers for the lives of their enemies, and no cries for vengeance upon them. Prayers for a righteous vindication, for guidance, for faith to trust where they could not see, and for eventual peace and goodwill, were the only petitions.'

Christian Treatment of Enemies.

Rom. xii. 20.

A poor widow, who was a washerwoman, partly depended for support upon the produce of her garden. In it was a peach-tree, the fruit of which was coveted by some boys of the village. Accordingly, one night they entered the garden to rob the tree. The widow had, however, made a timely gathering of her fruit that day. In revenge for their disappointment, the wicked lads turned some swine into the garden, who, by morning, had wrought havoc among the poor woman's vegetables and made her suffer in consequence through the winter. In looking at the desolation, she picked up a knife with a name engraved on the handle. It was the name of a village boy whom she knew, and whom she thus recognised as the cause of her loss. However, nothing was said about the matter. During the ensuing months, a revival took place in the village in question, and among those who became convicted of sin was the owner of the knife. Becoming converted, he obeyed his conscience by going to the widow and confessing the wrong he had done her. Thereupon she told him she had long known it, and showed him his knife. 'But why did you not inform upon me, and make me pay the damage?' he asked. 'There was a more excellent way,' she said; 'I took that.' 'What was it?' asked the lad. 'To pray for you, in accordance with the Master's directions.' So the widow had her revenge.

Vengeance.

Rom. xii. 19.

Longfellow tells us in one of his poems that a brazen statue of justice, raised on a column, stood in the midst of an ancient city. It held the scales of justice in its left hand, and a sword in its right, to signify that justice presided over the laws of the land, and that the hearts and homes of the people were protected under a righteous rule. There the statue stood, year after year, a silent and beautiful symbol. Even the birds built their nests in the scales of the balances, having no fear of the sword flashing in the

sunshine above them. But, in the course of time, the laws of that land were corrupted; might took the place of right, and the weaker were oppressed. During this period it happened that a necklace of pearls was lost in a nobleman's palace. Suspicion fell on an orphan girl, who lived there as maidservant, and after a formal trial she was condemned to die on the scaffold for her supposed theft. Patiently she met her doom at the foot of this very statue of justice; and as her innocent spirit ascended to her Father in heaven, the Father of the fatherless, and the righteous judge, lo! a tempest burst over the city, and a thunderbolt smote the bronze statue of justice, hurling the scales to the ground: and in the hollow of one of them was found the nest of a magpie, into which was woven this very necklace of pearls!

Forgiveness. MALIBRAN, the great operatic singer, had but one rival,
ROM. xii. 20, 21. Henrietta Sontag; and the feeling of rivalry between them, intensified by their admirers, grew very severe. But when Sontag fell ill, Malibran volunteered to sing for Sontag at a benefit concert given in Paris, and secured for her a large sum of money. Henceforward there was nothing but true esteem and affection between them.

Forgiveness. SPEAKING of the martyrdom of Wishart in 1546, Mr.
ROM. xii. 20, 21. Froude writes: 'In anticipation of an attempt at rescue, the castle guns were loaded, and the port-fires lighted. After this, Mr. Wishart was led to the fire, with a rope about his neck, and a chain of iron about his middle: and when he came to the fire, he sat down upon his knees and rose up again, and thrice he said these words: "O Thou Saviour of the world, have mercy on me! Father of heaven, I commend my spirit into Thy holy hands." He next spoke a few words to the people; and then, last of all, the hangman that was his tormentor fell upon his knees and said, "Sir, I pray you forgive me, for I am not guilty of your death;" to whom he answered, "Come hither to me," and he kissed his cheek and said, "Lo, here is a token that I forgive thee. Do thy office." And then he was put upon a gibbet and hanged, and then burned to powder.'

Forgiveness. WHEN the trial of Sir Thomas More was ended, and he
ROM. xii. 20, 21. was judged guilty of death, being asked if he had anything to say, he replied: 'My lords, I have but to say that, like as the blessed apostle S. Paul was present at the death of the martyr Stephen, keeping their clothes that stoned him, and yet be now both saints in heaven, and there shall continue friends for ever, so I trust, and shall therefore pray, that though your lordships have been on

earth my judges, yet we may hereafter meet in heaven together, to our everlasting salvation: and God preserve you all, especially my sovereign lord the king, and grant him faithful counsellors.'

Forgiveness. Rom. xii. 20, 21. When the monks of the Charterhouse were, in 1535, threatened with martyrdom unless they agreed to submit themselves to the authority of the king (Henry VIII.) the prior of the brotherhood bade them prepare for the worst, to choose each his confessor, to confess their sins one to another, giving them power to grant each other absolution. The next day, after he had preached a sermon, he rose from his place, 'went direct' to the eldest of the brethren, who was sitting nearest to himself, and, kneeling before him, begged his forgiveness for any offence which, in heart, word, or deed, he might have committed against him. Thence he proceeded to the next, and said the same, and so to the next through them all, they following him, they saying as he did, each from each imploring pardon.

Forgiveness. Rom. xii. 20, 21. George Moore used to say, 'The memory of my own youthful follies caused me on many occasions to forgive what I have seen wrong in the conduct of hundreds of young men in my employment, and give them another chance.'

Forgiveness. Rom. xii. 20, 21 During the American Revolutionary War there was living in Pennsylvania, Peter Miller, a well-known preacher. Near the church lived a man who secured an unenviable notoriety by his abuse of Miller. He was also guilty of treason, and was for this sentenced to death. No sooner was the sentence pronounced than Peter Miller set out on foot to visit General Washington, at Philadelphia, to intercede for the man's life. He was told that his prayer for his friend could not be granted. 'My friend, exclaimed Miller, 'I have not a worse enemy living than that man.' 'What!' rejoined Washington, 'you have walked sixty miles to save the life of your enemy? That in my judgment puts the matter in a different light. I will grant you his pardon.' The pardon was made out, and Miller at once proceeded on foot to a place fifteen miles distant, where the execution was to take place on the afternoon of the same day. He arrived just as the man was being carried to the scaffold, who, seeing Miller in the crowd, remarked, 'There is old Peter Miller. He has walked all the way from Ephrata to have his revenge gratified to-day by seeing me hung.' These words were scarcely spoken before Miller gave him his pardon, and his life was spared.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Forgiveness. THE Caliph Hassan, son of Hali, being at table, a slave
ROM. xii. 20, 21. accidentally dropped a dish of meat, which, being very hot, severely burned him. The slave, affrighted, instantly fell on his knees before his lord, and repeated these words of the Alcoran: 'Paradise is for those who restrain their anger.' 'I am not angry with thee,' replied the Caliph. 'And for those who forgive offences,' continued the slave. 'I forgive thee,' added the Caliph. 'But above all for those who return good for evil,' said the slave. 'I set thee at liberty,' rejoined the Caliph, 'and give thee ten dinaras.' Shall we say we have not seen so great charity, no, not in Christendom? We remember with satisfaction a Cranmer of whom it was affirmed, 'Do that man an ill turn, and you will make him your friend for ever.'

Forgiveness. IN the year 1818, Tamatoe, the king of Huahine, one of
ROM. xii. 20, 21. the South Sea Islands, embraced the gospel. Some of the heathen islanders resolved on the destruction of him, and of those who, with him, had become followers of Christ. The enemy laid their plan, and had purposed to burn to death those whom they seized. But the plot was discovered; the small band of Christians were on the shore in readiness to meet their foes as they leaped from their canoes, and soon gained a complete victory. And now these heathens looked for nothing but death, and that a cruel death. How great, then, was their surprise when the Christians assured them that they meant not to touch a hair of their head, because Jesus had taught them to treat kindly their bitterest foes! They went further—they prepared a sumptuous feast, and asked the captives to sit down and partake. Some of these were so amazed as to be unable to taste. At last one of them arose (one of the heathen leaders), declared himself no longer a follower of helpless idols, stated his cruel intentions had he been successful, but that this utterly unlooked-for kindness of the Christians had fairly overcome him, so that he could only admire their humanity and mercy. The result of all was, that in a few days every idol in the island had been cast away; for the heathen, melted by all this kindness, joined the Christians.

Leprosy. THE meeting of this leper with Christ illustrates the
S. MATT. viii. 2, 3. meeting of the sinner and Christ.

(i.) Behold a man!—an apparition—approach stealthily—taken by surprise;

(ii.) Full of leprosy—countenance livid—white—advanced stage—a loathsome sight and to be avoided; yet—

(iii.) Rushes to meet Jesus, and falling on his face (kneeling, worshipped Him)—

(iv.) 'If Thou wilt Thou canst'—deep anguish and great faith—for others have been cured.

(v.) Jesus touched him—its significance.

This fearful malady, disfiguring the whole person, and making it horrible to the beholder, was called by the Jews 'The Stroke,' and even by the Greeks, 'The Firstborn of Death.'

In a case of 'true leprosy,' the sufferer was pronounced utterly unclean, and forthwith assumed the awful badges of his said condition. He rent his clothes, bared his head, put a covering on his upper lip, as though he was mourning for the dead, and wherever he went cried out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' an exile from his home, his family, his friends, he was bound to reside without the camp or city in a separate house by himself, or in the society of others similarly afflicted. No Israelite ever pretended to effect a cure of this awful malady.

The regulations respecting it were no mere sanitary regulations, for it was not catching from one person to another, and the ordinances respecting it did not apply to the stranger and the sojourner. 'From the whole host of maladies and diseases which had broken in upon man's body, God selected this, the sickness of sicknesses, that He might thereby testify against that out of which it and all other sicknesses grew, against sin, as not from Him, and as grievous in His sight.' 'It was the outward and visible sign of the innermost spiritual corruption, a meet emblem in its small beginnings, its gradual spread, its internal disfigurement, its dissolution little by little of the whole body, of that which corrupts, degrades, and defiles man's inner nature, and renders him unmeet to enter the presence of a holy God.'

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